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OSWALD HASTINGS;

OR,

THE ADVENTURES OF A QUEEN'S AIDE-DE-CAMP.

BY

CAPTAIN W. W. KNOLLYS,

93RD. SUTHERLAND HIGHLANDERS.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

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CHAPTER I.

CHARGE OF THE LIGHT BRIGADE.

LEFT alone in his solitude, our hero had time to consider his plans. It would evidently be unwise to attempt to leave the villa during daylight, or even to enter any of the rooms, for patrols or fugitives might at any moment pass by and see him. Clearly there was nothing to be done but to wait till night, or till the arrival of the allies, should they pass that way in their march. At the same time, he felt that it was of the utmost importance that he should be able to see Lord Raglan before he had decided on any plan of operations. This thought worried Oswald dreadfully, but after turning the matter over thoroughly in his mind, he decided,

as we have said, on waiting till night-fall.

This point at last settled, he felt more at ease, and lying down on the mattress fell at once into a sound sleep, from which he did not awake till the hands of his watch pointed to half-past four. He felt very hungry, but ate sparingly, for he could not tell how long circumstances might compel him to remain. This light repast over, he passed the time by reading till the failure of light compelled him to close the book. Then stepping cautiously over the barriers of faggots, he went to the sitting-room, in order to try and discover if there were any Russian posts in the neighbourhood. Keeping well by the side of the wall, so as not to be seen by any one outside, he lay down flat on the ground, and peering cautiously out at the very edge of the window, so that only half his face projected beyond the wall, he surveyed the ground about the house.

Not a soul was visible, and he was about to stand up in order to get a better view, when over some rising ground, not a hundred yards distant, he saw a company of Russians marching towards the house.

Fearing lest they might be about to establish a picquet there, Oswald hurried back to his hiding-place, and with beating heart listened intently to ascertain if his fears were correct. In a couple of minutes he found that they were. From the sound he could tell that the picquet had halted at the entrance, and was sending out sentries. Then came a rush of feet and a noise of voices, as if the party had been dismissed. The wood-closet being on the ground floor, he could plainly distinguish the room occupied by the officers, and that appropriated to the men. The drawing-room, which was nearest the wood-closet, was taken by the officers, for Oswald could tell by the voices that

there were two, and their conversation was plainly audible. To his amusement he formed the subject of it. He heard a most wonderful account of his adventure of the previous night, accompanied by all sorts of marvellous circumstances, such as never existed save in the imagination of the recounteur.

"He was a wonderfully strong fellow," said one; "two men seized him, but taking hold of them by the collar, he knocked their heads together till they were senseless, and then he ran off."

"You don't mean it," answered the other; "and what became of him? Was he caught after all?"

"Oh, yes! his leg was broken by a musket shot, or he would certainly have got away; as it was he shot three more men with his pistol before he was disarmed."

"What a determined devil! Did they kill him on the spot?"

“No, they took him to the general, who ordered him to be hanged as a spy, and very short shrift he had, I can tell you.”

“Who was he, did you hear?”

“An English colonel, they say. Some people declare that he was no spy at all, but had made a bet he would bring away a handful of earth from the fort.”

“Just like those mad Englishmen, but I’m sorry for him though.”

“My good fellow, we want all our sorrow for ourselves, and have none to waste on strangers. Besides, you forget he is one of that impious race who have dared to defile with their presence the sacred soil of Russia.”

At this last sentence, which was said in a mock heroic tone, they both burst out laughing, and the second officer said somewhat viciously,

“Fancy calling this accursed Crimea sacred soil!”

"I know I wish heartily I wasn't treading it. Oh, dear, delightful Paris, what would I not give to be there, or even at foggy London, which at all events has this merit, that you can get from there to Paris in twelve hours."

"To the devil with Paris, and London too! I wish those fellows would bring some wood, I'm as cold as steel. I wish you would go and hurry them."

The impatient gentleman soon had his wishes gratified, as Oswald could tell from the crackling noise which proceeded from the drawing-room. The door of that apartment being then shut, Oswald lost the rest of their conversation. If his situation began with a comedy, it was very near terminating in a tragedy. Some of the soldiers prowling about the house came on the wood-closet, and joyfully began to seize the faggots for firing. Oswald trembled for fear they should bring a light, but fortunately they did not, and contented

themselves with dragging away a few of the topmost faggots. One did not seem to please them, for with a growl they threw it back again, and unconsciously gave Oswald a severe blow on the head with the unaimed missile. He could not repress an exclamation, which reaching the ears of the foragers, he gave himself up for lost. They listened intently, but, not hearing the sound repeated, evidently set it down for fancy, and did not attempt to explore the cellar, as Oswald feared they would.

Anxiously and wearily passed the night. He certainly had no more frights, but he was tormented with the thought that by this enforced delay he was losing an opportunity of rendering an important service to the army, and thereby obtaining distinction for himself. Neither had he any means of passing the long hours of darkness. With the enemy within a few feet of him he could not sleep; neither

could he smoke, for fear the smell of tobacco should excite their suspicions. What made it worse, too, was that the Russians might be intending to occupy this as a permanent post, in which case nothing but a miracle could save him from capture. Starvation also began to threaten him, for after a slight meal taken at midnight, there remained but a drum-stick of the chicken and a piece of bread the size of his two fists.

In this miserable plight he passed the night, every now and then falling into a feverish doze, from which he would awake with a start, fancying that Russian hands were on his throat. The next day no signs were visible of the departure of the picquet. At sunset, however, the time of his deliverance seemed to have arrived, for he could hear the men of the post getting under arms and preparing to leave. His disappointment may be imagined, therefore, when he found that, before their departure

they were relieved by another party.

Oswald's condition was now truly deplorable. His food was all gone, and the pangs of hunger had already begun to seize upon him. The bottle of wine too was empty, but by careful husbandry he had still half a pint of water left. Worse than all, there seemed no hope of escape. To allay his hunger he chewed some tobacco, which had the double effect of soothing his excitement and staying his appetite. He felt that things could not long continue thus, and that, if he did not escape before another thirty hours had elapsed, he should be too faint and weak to do so. At length he resolved to wait till the following midnight, and if nothing occurred in the meantime to try and leave the villa at all risks. Having thus made up his mind, he lay down to get a little sleep, both as a means of recruiting his strength, and of forgetting temporarily the discomforts and anxiety

he was undergoing. Unfortunately his slumber did not extend beyond sunrise. That day passed much like the former, that is to say, very miserably. When midnight came he prepared to make a desperate effort at escape. All of a sudden his attention was arrested by a scuffling of feet and the sound of orders. Listening anxiously, he found that these were the prelude of the departure of his unconscious gaolers.

This time there was no relief, and after waiting for a quarter of an hour to make certain that no one was coming, and that the coast was clear, the joyful conviction entered his heart that at last he had a chance of escape. Hastily swallowing the last drop of water, he issued cautiously out, and proceeded to examine the different rooms. They were empty. In the drawing-room he found a lump of black bread, and as he eagerly devoured it, he thought he had never

tasted anything so delicious before. He then went to the door of the villa, and keeping well in the shadow, looked out. Not a soldier was visible; not a sound met his straining ears. He concluded from the silence, and from the departure of the picquet, that the Russians had contracted their line of posts, and this belief he afterwards found was correct.

The point to be settled next was, in what direction he should bend his steps? It was the morning of the 24th, and as the Allies had not yet made their appearance, he concluded that they must have undertaken the flank march, which he knew had been discussed. How far they might have proceeded, he could not guess, but, at all events, they would certainly have moved from the Alma. He, however, determined to go towards the latter place, bearing a little to the right, in the hope either of striking the line of advance, or of meeting some

stragglers who could give him information.

By the time he had started, it was nearly four o'clock, and the stars were shining brightly. Making use of his Cape experience, he directed his course by them, and after walking as fast as the necessity for caution allowed, he found himself at day-break on the heights above the Belbec River. Halting for an instant, to survey the country, to his delight he saw the whole allied forces at his feet, being clearly able to distinguish the red coats of the English army on the persons of some of the rear guard, who were still about a mile on the south side of the stream.

Tired, and on foot, it took him a considerable time to overtake them, and when he did so, he had to pass some distance along the column before he could obtain a mount. This he at last procured from an artillery captain of his acquaint-

ance, who made a sergeant dismount and give him his horse. Thus provided, he galloped on, and soon reached Lord Raglan, who was riding close in rear of the advanced guard. Lord Raglan was as much astonished as delighted to see him again, for every one had given him up for lost.

In a few brief sentences, Oswald gave the important information which he had to communicate, namely, that the fortifications of the North Fort were by no means strong; but it came too late; the army was too much advanced for a change in the dispositions to be then made. Oswald was greatly disappointed at finding that all his perils had been undergone in vain. Lord Raglan saw his vexation, and kindly endeavoured to comfort him by warm praises of his conduct, and an assurance that his gallant exploit should not pass without the reward it merited. He made Oswald tell

his whole story from beginning to end, and expressed the greatest astonishment at his success.

"But you must be dying of hunger, Hastings; we must see if we can't find something for you to eat. Can you help us, Kingscote?" said he, turning to one of his staff.

"Not much, I'm afraid, my Lord; but I've got a couple of biscuits and a little brandy in my holster, which Major Hastings is very welcome to."

Oswald gratefully accepted this slight refreshment, for he was almost fainting from hunger, fatigue, and excitement; but a good sup of brandy revived him wonderfully, and he managed to finish the day's march.

This story does not purport to do aught save give an account of our hero's personal adventures, so we shall skip the events of the following month, and take the reader at once to the 25th of

October, and the heights overlooking the fatal valley of Balaklava. The Head-Quarter Staff was, on that eventful morning, assembled on the edge of the plateau, looking down on the events taking place below, as if from the seats of an amphitheatre, as it has been happily described. The charge of the heavy brigade had just taken place, and Lord Raglan was watching the movements of the Russians with his usual composed face, the only sign of excitement to be discovered being an occasional twitching of the stump of his maimed arm. Suddenly his glance became more earnest, and he remarked :

“Airey, they are taking away the guns from the Turkish redoubts. We must stop that. Send orders for cavalry to advance, and prevent their removing the guns. Horse artillery to accompany, and 4th Division to support on the right.”

Down at full speed, bearing this order pencilled on a scrap of paper, rode the

fiery, impetuous Nolan, as brave before an enemy as he was courteous and gentle in society, a true knight, though born in the nineteenth century. Following his course with their eyes, the Staff saw him reach Lord Lucan, stop there an instant, and then accompany his Lordship to Lord Cardigan. Another short pause here took place, and then, to the horror of the spectators, they saw the Light Brigade advance, and prepare to charge. Lord Raglan's arm began to twitch violently, as he saw the fearful mistake which was about to be perpetrated before his very eyes, without his being able to stop it.

The fleetest horse that ever was foaled could not have reached Lord Cardigan in time to arrest the charge, even if, once commenced, it would have been desirable to do so. It was to be feared, however, that, if successful, he would not stop at the line of guns on which he was

rushing. To prevent, therefore, further rashness, Lord Raglan said :

“ Ride for your life, Hastings, and tell Lord Cardigan on no account to pursue farther than the guns, and to retire at once in good order if he *has* done so.”

Oswald plunged madly down the steep slope at his feet, and riding as at a race, sped fleetly over the plain after the charging cavalry. Before even he had reached the valley, the first line had broken through the Russian cavalry, and was almost on the guns.

Driving his spur into the sides of his splendid Arab, he tore along like the wind. Shot and shell howled and shrieked past him—he recked not; bullets from the right, and from the left struck the ground at his feet, almost brushed his cheek, and even knocked off his cap—he heeded them not. Dead and dying horses and men strewed his path—he looked not at them. His one thought was to reach Lord

Cardigan before further mischief should occur; the one thing his eyes beheld was the leading line of cavalry. Though his horse flew, to him it seemed as if it were standing still, and again and again, in his fierce impatience, did he plunge his spurs deeply into the gallant steed's sides. His speed was fruitless, his efforts were thrown away.

By the time he reached the guns, the remnants of the Light Brigade were being forced back by overwhelming numbers, and in utter confusion. Not being able to find Lord Cardigan, he set himself to work to assist the officers nearest in trying to restore a little order. It was impossible. The reoccupied battery thundering in the rear, and cavalry in front and on both flanks, each man had to fight his way out as he best could. Seeing some dozen dragoons of different regiments in a knot, looking for an officer to command them, he put himself at their head, and

charging, broke through the squadron of Russian dragoons who tried to bar their path. When, however, Oswald looked round, he could see but four followers, the remainder having fallen in the attempt. Of these four, three were shortly afterwards shot down by the riflemen on the flank.

Accompanied by the survivor, Oswald was several times obliged to exchange blows with single men, or small parties of the enemy; but had got over the worst part of the valley, when his horse pitched violently on its head, flinging Oswald some yards in advance. A round shot had carried off one of its fore legs. Oswald was stunned by the fall, but was soon on his feet again. The dragoon, his companion, had pulled up on seeing his mishap, and wanted Oswald to get up behind him. Oswald refused, and ordered him to go, as he could do him no good, and might lose his own life, for two on the same horse would be almost defenceless

against attack. The man obeyed reluctantly, and Oswald, walking towards the end of the valley, looked about for a loose horse.

Luckily the fall had not lost him his sword, which was secured to his wrist by a strap. It was soon called into play. One of those cowardly vultures of the battle-field, the Cossacks, seeing a dismounted officer, charged him with his lance. Turning round, Oswald steadily awaited the attack. Coming up at full speed, the Cossack tried to run him through. When the point of the lance was within a foot of his breast, he sprang nimbly on one side, parrying at the same time strongly upwards. As the Cossack flew past, Oswald dealt, across his filthy face, a blow which brought him to the ground. Then springing actively into the saddle, our hero galloped off. The captured pony showed a strong desire to return to the Russian ranks, but a vigorous

application of the spurs conquered his obstinacy, and in another minute or two Oswald was in safety in rear of the Heavy Brigade, which was covering the retreat.

The order sent by Lord Raglan through Oswald may be by some thought apocryphal, but we assure the reader that we have seen the account of the battle in Colonel Hastings' own hand-writing, and his veracity has never been impeached, or, at all events, the want of it has not yet been discovered.

CHAPTER II.

A PAINFUL VICTORY AND A SAD STORY.

TOWARDS the end of October, Oswald learnt that a major of the regiment had died at Scutari, from the effects of dysentery. This circumstance gave Oswald his promotion, but at the same time compelled him to leave the staff. He found at once a wonderful change in his comforts. Before, he had enjoyed a share in a small bare-looking but weather-tight room at head-quarters. Now he had half a bell tent. Hitherto he had been called on for no night duty, and had received ample rations. Now his fare was scant, and every third night was spent out of bed. In short, he was thoroughly able to realize the difference

between the position of an aid-de-camp, with but little hardship or danger, and plenty of promotion, and that of a regimental officer, with little promotion, and plenty of hardship and danger. It is true that Oswald's career as a staff officer had not been devoid of peril, but then his was an exceptional case, and the rule holds good as we have stated it.

On the 4th November, Oswald, as field officer of the day, was in charge of a portion of the picquets in front of the right of the British camp. He felt it to be a duty of great responsibility, and one requiring extreme vigilance, for in common with many others he had long regarded the right as the most vulnerable part of our position. He therefore spent most of the night in visiting the sentries and outposts. Towards midnight he thought he could hear a rumbling of wheels to the right front, and went forward to listen. Perceiving no other in-

dications, and the noise even happening to cease for a few minutes, he decided that the sounds in question had been produced by the entry of a convoy into the town, or the departure of one from it. He therefore contented himself with warning the picquets to be on the alert, and returned to camp to lie down for an hour's sleep.

When he again visited the picquets, he was told that nothing extraordinary had occurred during his absence. Notwithstanding this reassuring report, he experienced a sort of presentiment of coming danger, and consequently ordered out patrols. Whether these did not go far enough, or whether, from the darkness of the night, they were unable to discover anything, it is difficult to say, but they returned after a time without intelligence. Yet Oswald was not satisfied, and determined to remain with the outposts till day-light. Just before sun-rise he

fancied he heard the tread of many feet approaching in the distance. Leaving his horse in charge of a drummer, he crept forward to reconnoitre. Owing to the thickness of the brushwood and a heavy mist, he could see but a short distance in front. When he had gone about three hundred yards he suddenly emerged on a piece of open ground, and there drawn up within a few yards of him he beheld a strong Russian column. Withdrawing as quickly as possible, he hastened back to the picquets, in order to give the alarm.

During his necessarily slow advance, however, a line of Russian skirmishers had been extended from their left across the line by which he had come, and he found his return intercepted. He tried to penetrate at another point, but here again he saw himself cut off. Several columns were also advancing steadily towards the camp, and he found that fate had once more

made him a prisoner. Nothing was left to him but to seek the concealment of a thick patch of brushwood, where he hoped to lie undiscovered till the events of the coming fight should give him an opportunity of rejoining his own men. It was maddening to remain thus passive, whilst, as he could see, the enemy were making preparations for a surprise, perhaps a fatal surprise, which he was helpless to prevent. To be precluded at such a critical moment from sharing in the fierce struggle which in a few minutes he would see commenced, was above all things distracting. It harrowed him to think that the unsuspecting picquets were at that very moment exposed to almost immediate destruction, that though they were scarcely beyond ear-shot, yet he could not give them notice of their danger. He could only hope that they might be more alert than he feared they would be, and trust to chance to rejoining them.

Suddenly a scattered fire of small arms, followed by the thunder of a numerous artillery, shattered the heavy air, and told that the battle had begun. Oswald eagerly listened for an answering fire, but, during some minutes, the isolated musket shots, few and far between, from the English position, showed how complete had been the surprise. At length the redoubled reports of the guns gave indications that others besides the mere picquets were engaged, but the wave of battle seemed to have broken terribly close to our position. Column after column of Russians passed Oswald's hiding place, till he began to tremble for the result. After a while the number of wounded men coming to the rear, rendered our hero's position exceedingly precarious. At any moment one of these men might discover him, and give the alarm. But he soon perceived that a more immediate danger threatened him. The English rifle bullets and round shot soon began to fall thickly

around him. As this, however, was a sign that our line was advancing, he welcomed them as messengers of good tidings rather than of death. Two hours thus passed away, and as yet the presence of numerous bodies of Russians in the neighbourhood had precluded all hope of escape. At the end of that time a wounded Russian officer passing within a yard of the bush where Oswald lay, was struck on the head by a round shot and fell to the ground a corpse. The idea seized Oswald that by putting on the dead man's great coat and cap, he might unperceived regain his own ranks. This seemed the more feasible as just then the ground near where he stood was deserted by the enemy. It is true that the chance of success was slight, and the certainty of death, if discovered, undoubted, but it was worth the risk, and after all he incurred considerable danger even if he remained where he was. Crawling out of

the bush on hands and knees, he stripped the dead man of his coat with some difficulty, and putting it and the cap on, and tucking his trousers into his Wellington boots, he made towards the English camp. He came across none but wounded men, too much occupied with themselves to think of scanning him seriously.

Before he had gone far he met a battalion of the Russians, returning before the determined onset of a company of the Scots Fusilier Guards, which having just come off picquet, and being unable to find its regiment, was doing a little fighting on its own account. Shouting hurrah, and waving his sword, he gesticulated as if trying to rally the Russians, but, as soon as they had passed, he fell suddenly behind a bush as if shot, and hastily throwing off his borrowed coat, stood up and joined the guardsmen. The latter were now forced to retire in their turn. Oswald accompanied them a short distance, and

then went in search of his own regiment. He joined it at a critical moment. The Colonel and Major had been just killed, and many of the other officers, and of the men, had likewise fallen. The supply of cartridges was exhausted, and, decimated by the Russian artillery, as well as threatened by a large column on the right, the regiment was on the point of retiring, abandoning two of our guns, of which the horses had been killed. Oswald's appearance acted like magic. "Here comes the major, he'll tell us what to do, boys," was the cry all down the ranks as he came up.

"Steady, men, steady, you mustn't retire," said our hero, seeing them about to fall back.

"Our cartridges are out, sir," replied several voices at once.

"Are they? Then I'll get you some more," was the cool answer. "In the meantime empty the pouches of any of

the dead or wounded near you, and lie down."

This done, he sent off a party for a fresh supply of ammunition, and desiring the senior captain to close and dress the ranks a little, he formed up two companies, and with a cheer led them against the column which was advancing on the right. The Russians hesitated, halted, opened fire, but finally retired in some confusion as the party approached them. Oswald had great difficulty in checking the ardour of his men, who were eager to pursue. He deemed it, however, more prudent to bring them back to the regiment. Shortly afterwards the ammunition arrived, and Oswald, being left entirely without directions, thought he could do no better than move in support of a party of the 4th Division which was advancing under the command of Sir George Cathcart.

He had however scarcely put his regi-

ment in motion when he beheld Sir George charge and drive the enemy some way beyond the two gun battery. Scarcely had this latter spot been passed when a large force of the enemy came over the brow of the hill and fell on the rear of Sir George's party, which had descended into a neighbouring hollow.

Our hero, seeing the imminent peril they were in, pushed on as rapidly as possible, but the mischief had been done. The 155th, charging furiously on the Russians, shook them, but the shock was not sufficient to liberate Sir George Cathcart, and Colonel Charles Seymour, his Adjutant-General, who, with a few men, were fighting desperately below. Oswald made frantic efforts to reach them, but his regiment was weak, and in the charge broken up into small parties. Rushing at the man nearest him, he cut him down, and then fired his revolver with deadly effect right and left

into the mass. The last shot was echoed by an exclamation in a familiar voice, and, springing into the air, Nachimoff fell dead. He had been shot through the heart by the pistol of the man whose life he had twice saved.

Overwhelmed with grief, Oswald dropped the point of his sword and felt quite faint. He would have been bayoneted in an instant, had not his men watched over his safety. Recovering himself by an effort, he hurled himself among the crowded foe, vainly courting that death which seldom comes when sought for. Fired by his example, the regiment did wonders, and the enemy at length broke and fled. The exploit was too late. Many of the 4th Division had fallen, others had in small bodies regained the hill, but their gallant leader lay stretched a lifeless corpse on the ground, and almost across his body, the equally gallant, the clever, the amiable, the popular, the

accomplished Charley Seymour. The French, about this time, began to appear on our right, and the battle slackened. In fact, though the fighting continued for some three or four hours later, the day was virtually over about noon.

The events of this sanguinary action brought so much bitterness with them, that, though Oswald had obtained the command of his regiment, and was mentioned most favourably in despatches, he could not rejoice at his good fortune. The latter had been bought at too dear a price. The death of so many of his comrades, and above all the thought that Nachimoff, to whom he was attached by the memory of such great services, given and received, had fallen by his hand, oppressed him with a gloom and sadness which lasted for weeks.

Immediately after his return to camp, he was summoned to the death-bed of one of the captains of his regiment, named

Meadows. Going to his tent, he found him gradually sinking from the effects of the amputation of his thigh, which had been shattered by a cannon-ball. He was quite aware that he was dying, and told Oswald so when the latter tried to cheer him up.

“Major, I have a great favour to ask of you.”

“I will do anything that is in my power, my dear Meadows, you may be sure.”

“Thanks, I knew you would. I’ve a confession to make, and my strength is going fast. Give me a sup of that rum and water. Thank you. I must be quick with my story. You will despise me, I’m afraid, and I deserve it, for I’ve been a sad blackguard. I am at this moment engaged to two girls at once.”

Oswald started at this extraordinary disclosure, but said nothing.

“Ah, you may well look disgusted—

I am, myself, now. Before I exchanged to the 155th, I was quartered in Ireland, and fell in love with a pretty girl of about sixteen, the daughter of a shop-keeper who had retired some years before on a very comfortable fortune. He had spared no pains or expense in her education, and had sent her to a first-rate school in England. The consequence was that in manner, appearance, education, and even voice, she was a thorough lady. Her mother, who was by birth a lady, and had originally been a governess, suffered much from ill-health, while the father, when not fishing, took a leading part in municipal business. The consequence of this was that poor Alice was left very much to herself, and was allowed to walk out alone when and where she liked.

One day I met her as she was running from a savage cow, and drove the animal away. She was a good deal frightened, so I accompanied her home. Struck

by her beauty and grace, I willingly profited by the hospitable invitation of the father to come and dine with him as often as I chose. Naturally I was thrown a good deal across Alice. The education she had received prevented her from caring to associate with those of her own class, while her position as a retired tradesman's daughter was a bar to her being received by the gentry of the town and neighbourhood. I was the first gentleman with whom she had been intimate, and as I had saved her life, she considered that quite sufficient reason for surrounding herself with a little world of romance, of which I was the hero. I, too, captivated by her charms both of mind and body, and having a good deal of idle time on my hands, fell in love with her.

I assure you, on my honour, that my feelings were at first perfectly pure. Indeed, I had formed no intentions at all, I only knew that it was very agreeable to be in

her society. Besides, I could not but feel flattered at the evident affection she had conceived for me. In short, as love begets love, I was soon as much attached to her as she was to me. What the end of it was to be, I did not think about, or rather, whenever the question occurred to me, I drove it away. Thus, two or three months passed away to both of us in a fool's paradise. We neither of us cared to look forward to a future attended with so many perplexities and difficulties. The present was enough for us, and that was heaven whilst it lasted.

At length the news came that the regiment was to proceed to England. Alice was in despair, and I was scarcely less unhappy. Things had now come to a crisis, and it was necessary to look them in the face. Moved by her grief and tears, I, hardly knowing what I said, promised to marry her, and the delight which this assurance gave her drove all

thought of the difficulties in the way of our union for the moment out of my head. No sooner had I left her than they returned with great force. My father, a proud, old-fashioned conservative Devonshire, country gentleman possessed all the class prejudices of a hundred years ago, and moreover entertained the strongest objections to all natives of Ireland.

It was true that I was his only son, and that, save me and a cousin, he had no other relation, but then the property was unentailed, and I was entirely dependent on him. The very fact that he was alone in the world, while it ensured me somewhat of a hold over him, gave him an additional claim on my obedience. He had always, though stern and imperious, been kind to me, and I shrunk from the thought of the pain I was about to cause him.

It would however be a fortnight before we started for England, so I determined to enjoy the present without disturbing

myself about the future, and to defer communicating with my father on the subject of our marriage till I could do so personally. It is so much easier to refuse by letter than *viva voce*. Meantime, Alice and I agreed to keep the matter secret from every one. Alas, poor girl, she had reason enough to wish for secrecy. The last evening of our stay at Limerick, I went to bid her farewell, I dreaded the interview both on account of the pain of separation, and also from the thought of her distress. To raise my spirits and strengthen my nerves, I had indulged rather freely in champagne.

To make a disgraceful story as brief as possible, I, flushed with wine and passion, took advantage of her innocence and love, and, God forgive me the base deed, effected her ruin. I, the heir of an ancient house—the founder of it was a pirate in the Spanish Main at the time of Elizabeth, but in the family records we termed him a

distinguished naval commander—would have scorned the idea of profiting by a friend's weakness to do him an injury, would have loathed the thought of betraying a trust reposed in me; yet on this occasion I did take advantage of weakness, did betray a trust, and to the detriment of one who ought to have been dearer and more sacred to me than all the friends in the world.

I must do myself the justice to say that with reflection came remorse and bitter loathing of my conduct. If I had felt any hesitation before, I experienced none now. Alice must be my wife, let who might oppose. It was the only reparation I could make for the great injury I had done her. I was bound by every argument which honour or feeling could suggest to make this poor atonement. Surely, my father, stern and prejudiced as he was, would not seek to hinder me. In such a case his high sentiments of

honour would overcome his pride of birth, and though he might blame me bitterly for the past, he would not seek to interfere with what I proposed for the future. The event showed I was mistaken, that it was a sentiment, not a feeling, of honour by which my father was actuated. When I began my confession he frowned, and said I had behaved very ill, but that young men would be young men, and he could make allowances for them.

"I daresay she was as much to blame as you," added he, "still, if she has a child, something must be done for them. If that should be the case, let me know, and I'll put the affair into our solicitor's hands; but I hope you'll not engage in such disreputable liaisons again. You don't know how you might be compromised. Those sort of women are so artful, and people of our position should always avoid a scandal. It might do you an immensity of harm, particularly at present,

for I have got a young lady in my eye, our neighbour, Lord Caversham's daughter, whom I want you to marry. He is a poor man for a peer, not above £5,000 a year, I fancy, and with so many daughters he will be glad enough to see his eldest, who has been out two years without being married, become the wife of my heir."

I was so petrified by the words that I could not say a word for some time. He remarked my silence, and asked the reason. I faltered out that I wished to make the only reparation in my power to Alice by marrying her. At this, his rage was so awful that I thought he would have gone into a fit. When his fury had a little subsided, I used every argument, and made every appeal to his affection I could, to induce him to allow me to fulfil my promise, but in vain. He swore the most fearful oath that, if I persisted in my intention, he would disinherit me and cut off my allowance.

“ If you like to marry the strumpet, and think you can support the woman and her children on your lieutenant’s pay, you can, but not one farthing of my money shall ever go to bring a worthless tradesman’s daughter into the family. Good God, that a descendant of Sir Roger Meadows should ever think of so disgracing himself ! It is perfectly horrible.”

His threats and anger I could bear, but when, suddenly changing his mood, he besought me with tears in his eyes, me, his only son, the last remaining scion of the family, the hope of his old age, not to inflict a blow on him which would bring down his grey hairs with sorrow to the grave—I weakly yielded and promised that at least I would do nothing without his consent, that I would take time to consider, and, indeed, gave hopes that eventually I might even bring myself to marry Miss de Marcy—de Marcy is Lord Caversham’s family name,

you know. I was a scoundrel, I know, but I could not support the sight of the old man's anguish. Besides, my great object was to gain time, for in spite of what I had said I could not, after all, give up all hope of some day making Alice my wife.

I am getting weak though, and must hurry through the rest of my story. My father, as soon as he obtained my promise became more kind and indulgent to me than he had ever been before. All his thoughts seemed to be directed towards the gratification of my every whim, hoping thus to wean my mind from Alice. With much tact he forbore to press me about Miss de Marcy, merely contenting himself with throwing us as much together as possible. As Lord Caversham's house was only three miles distant from ours, this was not difficult. In the meantime I wrote to Alice, telling her as gently as possible that my father's opposition was

stronger than I had anticipated, but that in time I hoped to overcome it, and in the meanwhile begged her to trust to my love, and believe in my constancy. By return of post I received an answer, full of expressions of the most devoted affection, expressing the utmost confidence in my truth, but tinged throughout with gloomy forebodings, for which, poor girl, she had too much reason.

I wrote to her again and again, but to my surprise received no reply. I could not understand her silence, and at first was much distressed by it. I would not believe that she had ceased to feel the love of which she had so lately given me such proof, and of which her only letter was so full. Yet, how explain her neglect ? Her father and mother might, it is true, have discovered our correspondence, and have forbidden its continuance ; but even if such had been the case, I felt certain she would have managed to write to me

clandestinely, if it was only to inform me of the fact.

As time wore on, however, and no letter from Alice arrived, I began to be angry. Was this, I thought, the treatment I deserved from her for whose sake I had braved my father's anger, and on whose account I had been on the point of being disinherited. It was most ungrateful, most heartless of her, and all the stories I had ever heard of woman's inconstancy occurred to my mind. I repeated a dozen times a-day, "Woman, thy name is fickleness, and the man is a fool who trusts you." In this frame of mind I easily yielded to the fascinations of Miss de Marcy's more high-bred manner, and the greater conventional refinement which the habits of good society had invested her with. I say apparent, for in my heart I believed that nothing could exceed the real refinement of Alice; but refinement of manner leading to the belief that it is

the index of refinement of heart, though it often is only a cloak to cover the deformity which exists beneath, is a powerful rival to mere refinement of feeling, and the poor garden-flower suffered in comparison with the brilliant exotic. Moreover, Miss de Marcy's conversation possessed a charm which dear simple Alice's had never exhibited. Love for the time had rendered me blind to the deficiency; but removed from its object, I acknowledged the difference, and confessed to myself that it was possible that I might in time have wearied of Alice as a companion. Miss de Marcy was a brilliant conversationist, and we had many topics of interest in common, while with Alice the only one was our love. The thought, too, would sometimes occur to me, in spite of myself, that even if, eventually, I overcame my father's opposition, it would only be nominally, that Alice could never be to him as a daughter, that a perpetual

barrier would exist between him and me, and that my wife would only be, at the best, tolerated by my friends.

Moreover, the evident preference Euphemia—for that is Miss de Marcy's name—showed me, flattered my vanity. That Alice should have loved me, was, I thought with a man's arrogance, only natural; she could have done no less to one so much above her in station. Besides, who could tell but that my father was right when he asserted that it was the position of wife to the heir of the Meadows, and not the individual himself, whom she coveted. With Euphemia it was different. She could gain no social advancement by marrying me. It must be myself whom she loved, and that, from amidst the host of admirers by whom she must have been surrounded in London, she should have singled me out for her preference, tickled my vanity.

There was another argument which told

dreadfully against Alice. I am ashamed to repeat it, but it was this. I could not bear the idea of introducing her into a family which boasted that no aspersions had ever been thrown on either the courage of the men or the chastity of the women—if an amour with Charles II. be excepted, but that of course does not count, for royalty covers a multitude of sins, even *faux pas*, and adultery is not adultery when a king is your fellow-sinner. On Alice a stain rested, which, even if concealed, nothing could wipe out. She had yielded to me. Might she not afterwards yield to another? The thought of marrying one who had thus forfeited her honour was dreadful, even though love for me had been the cause of the offence, and I cursed the day I had met her. When a man begins to draw comparisons, and to reason in this way, the result is tolerably certain.

After a few months' acquaintance I found myself engaged to Euphemia. On account

of the delays of the lawyers, it was decided that we should not be married for three months. In the meantime I had got my company, and exchanged into this regiment. Two months since our engagement had passed away, when most unexpectedly, as you remember, we were ordered to the East. Consequently our marriage had to be postponed.

Just before we sailed, a letter from Alice was put into my hands. The contents were most touching. Gently reproaching me for having never answered her numerous letters, she said she feared that they must have miscarried. To rescue this one from sharing the fate of its predecessors she had entrusted it to a friend who was going to Devonport, and would deliver it into my hands himself. After many ardent professions of her love, she assured me that, in spite of appearances, she did not doubt my affection for her. But the latter part of the letter

was heart-rending. In it she told me that she was about to become a mother, and that her state could not be much longer concealed from her parents, whose anger she looked forward to with fear and trembling. In conclusion, she entreated me to marry her at once, and thus conceal or palliate her shame. If I cared not for her who had sacrificed everything for me, at least I would do so for the sake of our child.

You may believe that this letter caused me the greatest anguish, but what could I do? We were to embark in an hour, and the time of our return was quite uncertain. I could not marry her at once, and if I deferred the ceremony till we came back it would be too late for her reputation. To marry her when no one but I and my father knew of her guilt had been distasteful enough to me; to marry when all the world was aware of her shame was intolerable. Yet should I

utterly plunge her into despair at a moment when she could so ill bear the blow? I could not resolve to do that. Like a weak villain as I was I adopted a middle course, I wrote a kind affectionate letter, explaining that I had never received her letters, had and concluded, therefore, that she had forgotten me. I showed her how impossible it was for me to marry her at once, but held out hopes that when I returned I might do so. I transmitted to her a cheque for £50 to cover the expenses of her accouchement, and begged her to try and manage that it might take place away from Limerick, and unknown to every one.

The fact is, I hoped something might turn up to break off my marriage with Euphemia, when, if Alice's name should still be unspotted to the world, I might marry her privately, and wait for an opportunity of acknowledging her as my wife. Yet I had not the courage to break my engagement with Euphemia, for fear

of exciting my father's suspicions. Besides, for her it was present love that I felt, for Alice it was only compassion and the memory of past affection. You need not blame me. I see plainly enough how infamously I have behaved, but you will admit circumstances were against me, and entangled me in meshes from which it was difficult to escape. In the first place, my father had intercepted Alice's letters to me, and thus weaned me from her; in the second, our departure on active service left me no opportunity of repairing the wrong I had committed, by marrying my victim.

Since leaving England, I have several times written to and received letters from both Alice and Euphemia. From the former I got a letter just before we started from Varna, saying that, by making a confidant of a married lady, a friend of hers in Dublin, she had succeeded in concealing the fact of her accouchement; that this event had taken place while on a

visit to this friend, whose husband, a merchant-captain, was absent on a voyage, and that the baby had been born dead. She herself had been dangerously ill, she added, but for that she cared not as she wished to die. Since our arrival here, another letter has informed me that, though still very delicate, she is better than she was. I assure you, Major, that all these various circumstances have had such an extraordinary effect on me, that even now, at this awful moment, I hardly know whom I love best. When I hear from Alice I am all tenderness to her, but the next letter from Euphemia drives the former completely out of my head.

Now you have heard my shameful confession—thank God that I have had strength to make it—I will tell you why I asked you to listen to it. I have a letter to Euphemia in my haversack, nearly written; I can add a postscript to it, but to Alice I cannot write. I have

been so false to her already that I do not wish to be more so, and, in the present tumultuous state of my heart with regard to her, I could not write to her even if I had strength enough. I want you to write and tell her whatever you think will most soothe and comfort the poor girl, and when you return to go and see her.

Before you came I made out my will—I have a few hundreds at my agents—leaving everything to you. Let Alice have it. Give her also a lock of my hair, and you may say with truth that I thought of her in my last moments, and bitterly repented the wrong I had done to her. Write also to Euphemia—you will see her address on the letter I have begun to her—and give an account of my death. Let her also have a lock of my hair, for, God help me, I do love her most fondly."

Here he sank back so exhausted, that Oswald feared his last moments had arrived. After a time, however, by the

help of some brandy, he revived. When he opened his eyes and saw Oswald standing by him he said,

" You will promise to do what I have asked you."

" I will, so help me, God," replied Oswald, pressing his hand, for he felt more compassion for the evident remorse than for the great baseness of the dying man.

" And you will write to my father, too, and tell him I forgive him anything he may have done about Alice. Go and see him when you return to England, and go and see poor Euphemia also. It will be a great comfort to them, and I know you won't mind the trouble."

Oswald assured him everything he had requested should be performed. He seemed much comforted, and saying, " God bless you, Major, for your kindness," begged that the chaplain might be sent for. Ere the morrow's sun rose he was a corpse.

Oswald lost no time in faithfully fulfilling his promise, at least the first part. He wrote to Alice, Euphemia, and Mr. Meadows, and received an answer from all three. These replies, though varying, as might be expected, in style and tone, were all equally affecting, and by no means tended to remove that melancholy from which, as we have said, Oswald was at that time suffering. To Euphemia he had to write more than once, to answer certain questions about Captain Meadows' last moments, and to carry out some request she made about his grave. Thus quite a correspondence sprung up between them. Her letters were very touching, but yet they seemed as if the writer rather hugged, than otherwise, the luxury of woe. This circumstance Oswald at last put down to a highly-wrought sensibility, though he was inclined to swear somewhat bitterly that the young lady seemed to like the excitement of losing a soldier-lover in action.

CHAPTER III.

THE ENTENTE CORDIAL.

Let us now for a time quit this episode in our hero's existence, and return to the grim scenes in which he was an actor. In due course he found himself in the gazette as a regimental lieutenant-colonel, vice—Hopkins killed in action. Frankland had died of cholera in Bulgaria. His friends thought that for services in reconnoitering the North Fort and at Balaklava, he would have received some more distinctive mark of approbation than a mere routine and almost matter of course promotion; but the authorities in England, in reply to Lord Raglan's strong recommendation, stated that, considering Lieutenant-Colonel Hastings' short service

and rapid promotion they considered that his conduct, which they fully appreciated, had been already sufficiently rewarded. Yet those were days of almost fabulous advancement. One officer got his company in exactly one year and a day from the date of his entry into the service. It is a sad instance of the compensation of fortune that this same young officer three years later lost his life at Cawnpore, not at the hands of the enemy, but by falling down a well during the action at that place.

We shall not attempt to follow Oswald through the horrors of the first winter; they have already been described *ad nau-seam*. Suffice it to say that he brought his Cape experiences to bear, and by dint of continual exertion and supervision succeeded in making his men as comfortable as the means at their disposal would allow. While other regiments were suffering, less from want of rations and from

necessary hardships, than from a want of method, handiness, and campaigning habits, the 155th had their coffee always properly roasted, their fires well supplied, their dinners palatable, and their tents well-drained.

All this was effected by a little common sense and arrangement. A few empty percussion-cap tins served as coffee roasters and some fragments of shells as mortars in which to grind the coffee when roasted.

Nothing was left to individuals. In each company so many men were told off to get wood, so many to keep up the fires, so many to prepare the coffee, so many to cook, while others were set to draining the tents, keeping the camp clean, and fetching water. An arrangement was also made by which every day a certain number of horses and ponies, those belonging to individuals as well as those belonging to the regiment,

were told off to bring up anything which might be required from Balaklava. No small amount of Oswald's private fortune also was devoted to the comfort of his men.

Besides this attention to their physical wants, he exerted himself in keeping up at the same time discipline and cheerfulness. The consequence was that, while other corps were miserable and disorganized, neglecting sometimes to salute their officers, and frequently making impertinent and abusive remarks in their hearing, the 155th was comparatively cheerful, efficient, and respectful.

In the capture of the quarries Oswald was actively engaged, but on the unfortunate 18th of June, in the assault on the Redan, foolishly planned by the commanders, and owing to the demoralisation caused by months of trench work, feebly carried out by the men, he was not one of the storming party. He was, how-

ever, present with his regiment in the trenches, though not in the advanced works. He burnt with indignation at the repulse and begged to be allowed to try and take the Redan with his own regiment, but was of course refused.

After the termination of the affair he was ordered up with his men into the quarries. Looking from thence over the ground in front, which was strewn with corpses, he thought he saw a man in the uniform of the rifles. He watched him closely, and at last observed him raise his head and look round towards our trenches as if appealing for succour. Oswald could not resist the gesture, and calling for volunteers, offered to bring the man in if two men would accompany him. He now reaped the reward of his exertions during the winter, for almost as one man the regiment claimed the privilege of sharing his danger.

Selecting two stout gallant fellows from

those who stood nearest him, and desiring the rest to keep up a heavy fire, so as to cover the attempt, he sprung over the parapet, and, followed by his two companions, ran at top speed towards the spot where the rifleman was lying. At sight of the little party, the Russians in the Redan brutally opened on them with artillery and musketry. The balls flew about them so thickly and continuously that they kept up a sustained hum. The earth was dashed in their faces, their clothes were riddled, yet not a wound was inflicted on any one of the trio. In safety they reached the man they came to succour, and hastily catching hold of his arms and legs they hurried back to the trenches as fast as their burden would allow them. They had just reached the parapet, and were on the point of jumping down into the ditch when they felt a sudden shudder pass through the man they were carrying. They had, however, no time

to inquire what was the cause, but got under cover as quickly as possible, amidst the cheers of the by-standers. Laying the wounded man gently down, Oswald called for a surgeon. He came, and, his sense of professional humour being touched, with a smile he pronounced the man to be dead. The shudder which Oswald had felt, had been the response to a rifle bullet in the head, from the wound inflicted by which the fresh blood was slowly welling.

War is a grim game, and gives rise to grim jokes. From that day forward, Oswald was known throughout the army as the "body-snatcher." His own men, however, regarded him with the greatest admiration, and soldiers of other corps would have fared ill had they spoken jestingly of "the Colonel."

The failure of the French at the Malakoff and of the English at the Redan, gave rise to a great deal of recrimination and

bad feeling between the armies. When English and French soldiers met, the latter would say in a scoffing manner, "Redan," to which the former would rejoin, "Malakoff," and sometimes "Waterloo," which made the red-trousered gentry very savage. Nor was there more good feeling between the officers of the respective armies. In fact the "entente cordiale" had never been much more than a name. Both nations had tried hard to believe in it, but were at last compelled to confess it was but a sham. Every success was claimed by the French, every failure attributed by them to the English. Neither had national antipathies quite died out, and in addition to the customary jealousies which occur between members of a combined army, there was such a difference in the social standing, the manners, ideas, and customs of the officers of the two nations, that harmony could not by any reasonable person be expected.

Oswald had a proof of the existence of this bad feeling about a fortnight after the failure of the assaults on the Malakoff and the Redan. In company with several officers of the division, he had ridden over to dine at Kamiesch. After a dinner at the French Café, which would have done no discredit to Paris, and which under the circumstances was a triumph of art and ingenuity, they had all lighted their pipes and were sitting, talking over the prospects of the siege.

In the midst of their conversation, a crowd of young French officers of the line came in, and seating themselves at the next table, began talking in a very loud, swaggering tone. After a while they cast rude glances at their neighbours, and proceeded to make some most offensive remarks about the recent failure at the Redan, saying that the English had made a mess of everything they had undertaken, and that, had it not been

for “nous autres” they would have been long ago driven into the sea. The English officers could not help hearing these observations, which were evidently directed at them, but yielding to Oswald’s persuasions they held their tongues and took no notice of the vapouring. Emboldened by this forbearance, the Frenchmen became more and more offensive, till at last human nature could stand it no longer, and Oswald, springing from his seat, said calmly in French,

“I would advise you, gentlemen, to talk a little lower if you do not wish us to hear what you are saying.”

On this a quarrelsome-looking young fellow rejoined,

“I do not see any reason why we should speak more gently, you are perfectly welcome to hear all we are saying.”

“Am I to conclude then,” said Oswald, “that you deliberately wish to insult us?”

"You may conclude what you please," replied the Frenchman, "it is indifferent to us."

"Then all I have to say is that you are not acting like 'gens comme il faut,' and that your conduct is not that of well brought up people."

The Frenchman's face became livid, and rolling his r's in a marvellous manner, he spluttered out,

"It's very well to speak thus, you are a colonel, and I am but a poor devil of a lieutenant; but were we of the same rank it would be quite otherwise."

"To the devil with my rank, look on me as a simple English gentleman and do what you like. I tell you I consider you a *lâche* thus to insult unoffending people."

No sooner was this speech concluded, than the fiery Frenchman seized the glass of absinthe he had been drinking

and hurled the contents at Oswald's head.

Our hero promptly avenged the insult by knocking the offender down. A general skirmish now took place. The Frenchmen sprung to their feet, and with a torrent of whimsical oaths and gestures made a rush at Oswald, while his companions, crowding round him, tucked up their sleeves and prepared for action.

The mêlée soon became general, but Frenchmen are no match for Englishmen when it comes to fists. Oswald found himself, after a few random blows right and left, singled out by the officer whose impertinence had caused the affray. The latter was one of those men not frequent in the French army, whose whole leisure time is spent in acquiring the art of inflicting injury in various ways. When not on duty, drinking *eau sucré* or playing dominoes, he was in the habit of practising

assiduously with the pistol or the small sword, and in perfecting himself at the *savate*. In this latter accomplishment he had attained considerable proficiency, as Oswald found to his cost. Before the latter knew what he was at, his adversary raised his foot and dealt him a kick on the chin which sent our hero flying into the corner of the room, with the conviction that his jaw was broken.

Furious at what he considered an unfair and foolish style of fighting, he soon recovered himself, and again advanced on the Frenchman. This time Oswald was prepared for his tactics, and when his opponent offered to repeat the kick which had proved so effectual, the latter found the uplifted foot nimbly seized, and held as in a vice, while a series of well delivered left handers speedily blackened his eyes, made his nose bleed, and sent a couple of teeth down his throat. When he thought he had punished him enough,

Oswald gave his leg a tilt and threw him bruised and bleeding on to the floor of the café. By this time the Englishmen, though inferior in number, had completely cleared the room, and the discomfited cause of the fight, picking himself up, followed his beaten comrades.

"I suppose the matter will not end here," said Oswald to his companions, "so we had better wait a bit, and see what they will do. I hope this won't get to the Commander-in-chief's ears, or we shall all get into a nice row; but I don't see how we could help it, they were evidently determined to quarrel with us."

After a few minutes the keeper of the café appeared, and addressing Oswald said that two officers wanted to speak to him.

"Show them in."

The man withdrew bowing, and the

next instant two French captains who had not taken part in the quarrel entered. Gravely saluting the company, they informed Oswald that their compatriots had been very much insulted, that the affair could not terminate thus, and that honour demanded a *coup de sabre*.

“ I regret very much, gentlemen, what has occurred. At such a moment any want of cordiality between the two armies cannot but have a mischievous effect, but it is not we who are to blame. Your friends apparently came here determined to insult us. We bore their rudeness for some time, but it became so gross at last that we could put up with it no longer. The regulations of the English army strictly forbid duelling, I should be glad therefore if any means could be found of arranging the matter without proceeding to extremities. There is not a man here on either side who has not given proof of his courage before the enemy; therefore,

however the matter may end, no one can accuse either of us of cowardice."

The envoys politely allowed the weight of his remarks, but said that, though duelling was not in accordance with English manners, yet that the contrary was the case in France, and that the officers who had entrusted the negotiation to them would feel for ever disgraced if the stain on their honour was not wiped out with blood.

"It is an incident to be regretted, but what do you wish?" they added with an expressive shrug.

Seeing that any attempt at accommodation was useless, Oswald consented to discuss the arrangements for a meeting. But what was his astonishment when he found that it was proposed that all the Englishmen present should be provided with an adversary, and that, as they were fewer in number than the Frenchmen, some of the former, after having concluded "their affair," were to have a second

fight with the surplus. Our hero could not restrain a smile at this singular and sanguinary proposal, and with some difficulty persuaded the warlike ambassadors that a representative should be chosen from each nation, by whose combat the wounded honour of the irate Frenchmen might be satisfied. He himself, as the senior, claimed the right of being the champion of the English.

This point being at length settled, the question of time, place, and weapons remained to be discussed. These points involved little difficulty. Both parties agreed that the duel must take place immediately, and that the best place would be a ravine about a quarter of a mile in rear of Kamiesch. Nor was there more difference of opinion regarding the weapons to be employed. Oswald, as the person challenged, had the choice of weapons, and as he was a remarkably good swordsman, and thought swords would be less

likely to prove fatal than pistols, he decided for the former. Of course, the Frenchmen were too happy to agree to this selection. Two officers on each side were to act as seconds. The preparations being thus completed, and the moon shining brightly enough for the purpose, the party set out for the appointed spot, the English officers waiting in the café for the result of the affair.

That a duel is a wicked thing is undeniable; that it is also a stupid thing will, we think, be as generally admitted, and that in England, at least, it is an anachronism is patent to all. Some excuse should, however, be made for English officers, especially when involved in quarrels with foreigners. In such a case it is not only a question of individual but also of national honour. Moreover, the traditions as well as the practice of the British army are very inconsistent on this subject. If you fight, you are

liable to be tried by a court-martial; if you don't, you are equally amenable to military punishment.

The question becomes more complicated when it is recollected that the civil law also steps in, and pronounces the killing of an adversary in a duel to be murder. Thus an English officer stands in this predicament should he happen either to receive a challenge or an insult. If he fights he will probably be tried by a court-martial, and if he escapes punishment from this tribunal he runs a great, almost a certain, risk of finding himself arraigned before a civil court. If he refuses to fight, he will be justified in so doing by the laws of the country, but on the other hand he will be tried by a court-martial for conduct unbecoming the character of an officer and a gentleman, and even if not cashiered for the offence will be looked on with contempt by his brother officers.

We do not seek to excuse Oswald's behaviour on this occasion, we merely relate what he actually did. The affair, like most others of a similar nature, presented no feature of interest in its details. Taking off their coats, the two adversaries, to whom the bright moon furnished "a very pretty small sword light," placed themselves "en garde." There was very little preliminary fencing, for the Frenchman was bent on killing his opponent, and attacked with a fury which lost him some of his homicidal skill. Oswald made up his mind to content himself with disarming his adversary, though he had no objection also to inflicting a slight flesh wound, if possible, as a punishment for his bullying behaviour. The absence of all anger on his part gave him a great advantage over the hot-headed Frenchman. More than once could he have run the latter through had he chosen, but he abstained.

At last his forbearance was exhausted, for the Frenchman, forcing his guard, wounded Oswald slightly on the left shoulder. When he felt the smart he became excited, and determined to spare his adversary no longer. Concealing the fact of his being wounded, for fear the fight should be stopped, he prepared to take advantage of the first opening his opponent should give. For a moment they were on an equality, both being good swordsmen, and both carried away by anger. Oswald, however, soon recovered a mastery over himself as regarded his actions, though his heart continued to burn with that fierce desire to slay which seizes on us when our blood becomes heated by combat.

All this time the combatants had been advancing, retreating, moving to the right and to the left over a space about twenty yards square. We say all this time, yet the thoughts, emotions, and

events alluded to were crowded into a few minutes. The opportunity came at last. The Frenchman made a savage lunge which was put by, and before he could recover himself, Oswald's sword entered his chest with such force that the point came out at his back, and the hilt struck against his body. He staggered back a pace, and then fell heavily to the ground with our hero's sword still in him. At this sight Oswald's anger vanished, and a bitter remorse took possession of him. Before the second could run to the wounded man's assistance he was at his side, and withdrawing his weapon tried to staunch the rapidly flowing blood. Pulling up his shirt, the doctor proceeded to examine the wound with a face as immovable as if he were merely looking at a cut finger. The quarrelsome but gallant Frenchman besought Oswald to leave him and take care of himself.

"It was all my fault," he feebly uttered;

"take witness that the Englishman is not to blame. I have well merited what I have got."

Oswald refused to stir, and continued to form one of the anxious group which awaited in painful suspense the report of the doctor. Hope is the last emotion which quits the human heart, and though there seemed little or no chance that the wound was not mortal, yet Oswald watched with fearful interest the doctor's face, to try and extract from its expression some antidote to the despair which oppressed him. But an instant before these two men were thirsting for each other's blood. Now the re-action had set in, and Oswald would willingly have given his own life to save that of his quondam foe. At length the doctor looked up, and with a reassuring expression of countenance said to the patient :

" You have had a narrow escape, my friend, but you will not die this time."

He explained to his delighted listeners that Oswald's sword had struck against a rib, and turning off, had passed between the ribs and the skin, merely inflicting a wound which, though rather severe, was by no means dangerous.

The excitement over, our hero began to feel somewhat faint from loss of blood, and when the doctor had finished binding up the Frenchman's wound he requested his attention to his own. It was, as we have said, but slight, and a little brandy, which one of the party had taken the precaution to bring with him, soon revived him.

Supporting the more seriously wounded of the two between them, the party returned to Kamiesch, and after receiving the congratulations of those who had awaited his arrival at the café, Oswald in company with them rode slowly back to camp.

Of course the affair soon got wind, but,

as the authorities of both armies only heard of it through their official instead of their corporeal ears, they decided that for the sake of harmony it would be best to let the matter drop.

It is pleasant to be able to add that the two combatants became after this the greatest friends. During Rocoux's—for that was the Frenchman's name—convalescence, Oswald paid him frequent visits. Nor did their intimacy cease with his recovery. The lesson he had received seemed to have made a deep impression on Rocoux, and from being dissipated, swaggering, and quarrelsome, he became one of the quietest, most courteous, peaceable fellows in the French army. One day being off duty, Oswald profited by his leisure to pay a visit to the French left trenches, and finding Rocoux on duty in the cemetery, he sat down and had a long talk with his new friend.

The conversation happened to turn on

Napoleon, and from thence by a natural transition passed on to the great conqueror's famous guard. Oswald discovered from Rocoux's remarks that the re-establishment of the guard by Louis Naploeon, and their peculiar privileges, were not received with much favour by the rest of the army. They were particularly disgusted at the smaller share of work allotted to this petted corps. We believe at the commencement of their service in the Crimea they were not employed in the ordinary trench work, and Rocoux made some bitter comments on the fact.

"Those fellows give themselves such airs too over us who are the working part of the army, and undergo all the hardships and dangers. See what one of them has written," and he pointed to some lines scrawled on the wall with a bit of burnt stick. Looking at them, Oswald saw that they contained the heroic reply to the summons to surrender, addressed to

the guard at Waterloo, which General Cambronne did not utter, "La garde meurt, et ne se rend pas."

"I'll improve it for them," said Rocoux, with a merry twinkle in his eyes; and taking a piece of wood out of the fire, he added a few syllables which made it read thus, "La garde *demeurt ici*, et ne se rend pas *aux tranchées*."

CHAPTER IV.

THE REDAN

On the 8th of September Oswald, with a portion of his regiment, was among the stormers. Rushing across the open space, nearly three hundred paces in breadth, he raced with an officer of the 90th as to who should first mount the parapet of the Redan. As they neared the ditch, Oswald was a yard ahead, but just then he stumbled over a fragment of a shell and fell. He was up in a moment, but his competitor for fame had in the meantime shot ahead of him. Luckily for our hero it was so, for jumping into the ditch he was in the act of scrambling up and entering by an embrasure just above him, when from it a sheet of flame flashed out,

followed by a concussion of the air which for a moment partially stunned him.

When he recovered his senses he saw at his feet, for he had fallen back with the shock, the headless trunk of the officer of the 90th. Before the gun could be reloaded Oswald, followed by several of his men, was in the midst of the artillerymen who were working it. In an instant the latter had either fallen or fled, and our hero calling to those nearest to follow, plunged into the work. The rush across the open, in which many had fallen, had thinned the ranks of the stormers, and Oswald could at the moment collect only about forty men. With these he executed a charge, which, if supported, would have probably accomplished the capture of the work.

Unfortunately, however, the nature of the warfare to which the men had been so long accustomed, had got them into what may be termed a hole and corner

style of fighting. They clung to the parapets and the traverses, from whence they kept up a desultory fire on the enemy, but not all the efforts and examples of their officers could induce them to advance into the interior of the Redan.

Every now and then some gallant officer would rush forth, followed by half a dozen of the boldest of those near him, only to be shot down without the satisfaction of having done any good. Oswald and his party being more numerous succeeded somewhat better. Keeping well together they broke the scattered line of Russians opposed to them, and penetrated to the very gorge of the work. At that point, crushed by the fire of the barrack battery, and charged in flank by a fresh body of Russians, they were obliged to retire. At one moment indeed they were completely cut off, but shouting to his men to keep close together, he gave the word to charge. A serried row of bayonets seemed

to bar their progress, but firing two barrels of his pistols in rapid succession, cutting one man across the face and running another through the body, Oswald managed to create a gap by which he and a few of his men passed.

On rejoining the storming party, Oswald found that out of the forty men and officers who had charged with him, scarcely ten had returned. Casting a glance around him, he found matters looking very bad indeed. In the narrow space contained between the two first traverses on the right and left of the salient, were assembled the remains of the storming party, loading and firing rapidly, it is true, but making no attempt to form and charge. No supports seemed to be coming up, and the Russian reinforcements were gathering in large numbers at the gorge. Every moment some of the small body of Englishmen were dropping, and matters seemed desperate.

Oswald sought for some of his own officers to assist him in forming the men for another charge. Six had led the detachment of the regiment to the assault. Of these one had fallen before reaching the Redan, three had been shot inside, and there now only remained Oswald, and a young ensign, named Northcote, scarcely sixteen years old. Calling the boy to his side, Oswald was giving him some instructions, when he dropped at his feet, with a bullet through the leg. As there was no leisure either for pity or assistance, Oswald merely said, "Not badly hit, Northcote, I hope—"

"Broken leg, I'm afraid, Colonel," was the quiet reply.

Our hero, thus deprived of assistance, called out to one or two officers of other regiments to help him to form up the men. They zealously seconded him, but all efforts were in vain; and Oswald, in despair, hurried off to Colonel Windham,

the senior officer present, to ask what was to be done.

"If support does not come soon, the game is up. Those Russians are gathering in large numbers every moment, and if they make a rush, out we go, that's certain."

"Certain enough, but what's to be done? I have sent for the supports, but there's no sign of any coming. I tell you what, I'll go and bring them up myself. You try and keep the men firm, I'll be back in a minute."

So saying, the gallant Windham walked off as coolly as if in Hyde Park.

Oswald, greatly depressed at the turn affairs had taken, went from man to man, desiring them to keep up their fire, and encouraging them with the assurance that help was at hand. As he passed along, he came to the spot where young Northcote had been hit. He gave a hurried glance to see how it fared with him, and he felt

proud of his ensign as he saw the gallant youth leaning against the parapet, smoking a cigar as composedly, and with as much apparent enjoyment, as if he had been in the mess-room. He had only time to say, "Well done, my boy, if you can't fight you can set a good example," when his attention was called off by the advance of the Russians.

Oswald had the true military instinct, and knew that in desperate cases there is nothing like taking the initiative. Calling to those nearest him to charge, he was obeyed by about twenty men, whom he led with such fury, that the enemy were for an instant staggered. Oswald discharged the remaining barrels of his pistol into the dense mass in front of him, cut down one man, and knocked down another with his fists. Receiving at the same instant a blow on the head from the butt end of a musket, and a shot in the chest, he fell senseless to the ground.

Charging over his body, the Russians slew nearly all his companions, and then surging heavily against the feeble remnants at the salient, pushed them into the ditch, from whence by twos and threes they regained their own lines.

Some two hours after the events thus described, Oswald's senses began to return. Still he felt as if in a dream, and an irrepressible languor caused him to keep his eyes closed. He did not even try to think, and in this state of semi-stupor he continued several hours of the night. A cold breeze playing upon his forehead first roused him to consciousness. He strove to rise; but felt as if all his blood were changed into lead, and weighed him down. He then tried to turn his head, but the effort made it swim to such an extent that he desisted. Lying on his back, with his face towards the town, he could see nothing but the stars gazing with cold indifference on the field

of slaughter beneath them. A fetid sickening smell of blood told him that he was surrounded with corpses, and here and there a groan showed that some spirits were still struggling to escape from their prisons of clay and suffering.

The events of the day came back to him like a scene at a play, yet they seemed removed by years from the present moment. Was he dying? He knew not, he recked not; physical weakness rendered him indifferent to everything concerning himself. Yet the master-passion, glory, survived after every other feeling had departed. His only thought was a vague sense of satisfaction that at least he had not been driven from his post. The actual present was nothing, the future less than nothing, to him; yet the exciting scenes and episodes of the past combat chased each other through his brain like the episodes of a drama which from lapse of time had mellowed into unimportance.

By degrees this lethargy somewhat abated, and his thoughts began to occupy themselves with the actual present. Strange to say, they did not touch on his own state, or on that of the army, but dwelt on the merest trifles. He busied himself with wondering whether his servant had been killed, and if so who would be selected to take care of his horse; whether the adjutant had prepared a return which had that day been asked for; whether the shoemaker would be able to repair a pair of boots which required mending, and similar unimportant matters. A mine blew up not very far off, and he conjectured lazily as to how it had been fired, by train or by electricity.

In this state he continued, how long he knew not, for his thoughts became confused, and he sank into a swoon-like sleep. When he again opened his eyes, he was in his own tent, watched over by his soldier-servant, who at the sight of returning

consciousness exclaimed, "Thank God!" and hastily left him.

Oswald felt a splitting pain in his head, and feebly raising his hand to his forehead to discover the cause, found it enveloped in a bandage. He then tried to turn in his bed, but the effort caused him such agony in his side, that he desisted, and fixing his eyes on the door of the tent, anxiously waited for some one to explain how he came to be in this state.

Soon the regimental surgeon, accompanied by his servant, appeared. Oswald endeavoured to speak, but found his voice as weak as that of an infant. The surgeon came to his bed-side, felt his pulse, gave him some soup out of a cup, and telling him that he would explain everything by-and bye, desired him to try and go to sleep again. This he soon did, and when he once more awoke, he felt so much stronger, that he was able to question his servant as to what had occurred. From him he

learnt, that on the Redan being entered the morning after the assault, the men of the regiment believing him killed, had sought for his body, in order to take it to Cathcart's Hill, and bury it, as a last mark of respect to their beloved Colonel. On arriving at the camp, they laid him on his bed whilst the grave was being prepared. Fortunately, the doctor came in, and with professional curiosity began to examine into the cause of death. Whilst so doing, he happened to place his hand on Oswald's heart, and finding that some warmth still remained there, he became convinced that he was not really dead. Powerful restoratives being applied, the signs of life became too apparent to leave any doubt on the subject. The supposed corpse was accordingly undressed, and the wounds were attended to. Beyond a slight twitching of the eye-lids, and a feeble intermittent fluttering of the pulse, he might have been deemed a corpse.

Nothing but the most skilful treatment, and the tenderest care, could have preserved his life. Both of these he got. Indeed the first can generally be obtained in a campaign, but as to the latter, there is greater difficulty. Money cannot buy it, but love can obtain it gratis. Soldiers are considered by many rough and devoid of pity. There was never such a mistake. War strengthens the nerves, but does not harden the heart, unless that heart has been bad originally. No woman can be more watchful, patient, or gentle than a soldier waiting on a sick comrade or officer.

With Oswald, who required constant attendance night and day, such was eminently the case. There was no telling off of orderlies to nurse him. The whole of the men not on duty eagerly contended for the post. When in health the Colonel had cared for and sympathised with his men. In sickness he found his reward. Let

none say—as some do—that the British soldier is ungrateful, incapable of attachment, and that kindness is thrown away on him. To those who hold such opinions we will say, “ You evidently do not know soldiers; without such knowledge, you cannot influence them, therefore you had better leave the army.” Out of a thousand men of every age, and taken from several different classes, some will certainly turn out ungrateful, but we assert that ingratitude is not the general characteristic of the soldier.

It is true that occasionally some necessary restraint or apparent harshness may for the time wipe out the remembrance of former benefits, but this does not proceed from insensibility to kindness, but from want of reflection. The soldiers are unable to discover the utility of the obnoxious measure, being often, comparatively speaking, little educated, in the higher sense of the word. They live in the present,

to the almost entire exclusion of the future or the past; and the image of a former benefit is wiped out by the wet sponge of a present unpleasantness. In time, however, they become just again, and judge their superiors by the general tenor of their conduct, and not by isolated instances. Officers expect too much from their men. Have they met with many cases of perfect gratitude in their own class? We fancy not. Why then should they anticipate more from soldiers? They forget also that there are two ways of granting a favour. In one instance it is bestowed mechanically, as a matter of custom, for the sake of appearances, or to avoid the trouble of saying no. In others again, it is given with a lively kindness and a hearty good will which makes it doubly precious. The first gift is the flower, pretty, indeed, but without perfume; the other combines both beauty and sweet smell.

But it is not mere benefits alone which

attach the soldier—but sympathy. Now, to entertain sympathy, you must enter into the feelings of the object of it. For this, both trouble and a power of imagination are required. The fact that often, where the first is taken, the second is absent, or the contrary, accounts for the scarcity of those officers who can influence their men, officers who can, as it were, carry them with them, and mould them to their wills. Yet this influence is an absolutely essential ingredient in the power of perfect command.

To return to our subject. That Oswald lived to be carried back to camp must be attributed; first, to the fact that the Russians, thinking him dead, let him lie where he fell; secondly, to the fortunate chance that the blood clotting over the wound in his chest checked the flow of the vital fluid from it. That he further survived such a dangerous wound can only be explained by the circumstance that he

possessed a strong constitution, and that all that skill and attentive nursing could do for him was willingly done.

As soon as he became somewhat recovered, he was moved to the Sanatarium on the Balaklava heights, where it was supposed he would reap the benefit of change of air in a healthy locality, and of greater comforts than he could obtain in camp. The change certainly did him good, but in the way of nursing he was scarcely so well off as before.

A host of organized nurses, most of them ladies, strove in every way to second the efforts of the doctors, and to soothe the tedious hours of sickness of the wounded men, but their attentions were exclusively given to the private soldiers. A false feeling of propriety and decorum prevented the officers from receiving these welcome good offices, yet they, far more than the men, missed the tender hand of woman, those little refinements and

luxuries which at home would have lightened the hours of pain and weakness. Surely even if this be denied, at all events it will not be contested that they had at least an equal right to share in the advantages so liberally bestowed on their inferiors. All were equally suffering human beings. All should therefore have been treated with impartiality. Like death, the sick-bed is a great leveller.

But if such kindness was denied to the officers, they received some compensation in the compliments paid to their senseless corpses. A very worthy old gentleman had accompanied the nurses to the East in the capacity of male duenna, and when an officer was buried he made a point of attending his funeral, dressed in a Militia or Deputy-Lieutenant's uniform of the last century, surmounted by a cocked hat which resembled a cheese cutter more than any head-dress at present worn. The unfortunate part of

the matter was that the individuals so honoured were unable, from natural causes, to appreciate the flattering attention, which we presume was intended to compensate for previous neglect.

After a long and tedious illness, Oswald in the month of December embarked for England, and, thanks to the sea air, reached it much improved in health, though still very weak.

CHAPTER V.

ENGLAND AGAIN.

ON disembarking at Portsmouth, he at once took the train to London. At Winchester he bought a newspaper, and it being a Wednesday, he eagerly sought out the gazette to see if he had got the C.B.ship for which he knew he had been recommended. The first name which met his eye was his own as a recipient of the coveted honour. His pleasure was, however, much marred by reading, at the end of the gazette, an announcement of the grant of that dearest object of a soldier's ambition—the Victoria Cross—to the two privates who had assisted him in bringing in the wounded rifleman on the 18th June. He had never thought much about the

deed afterwards, nor had he considered that, for an act (as he deemed it) of ordinary humanity, any reward was due. Still, if the reward was to be given, surely he ought to have shared in it, as he had shared in the danger which had earned it. He could hardly believe his eyes, and read the announcement over and over again, to make sure he had made no mistake.

No, it was too true; his name was mentioned, it is true, but only incidentally, and not as a recipient of the cross. The paragraph ran thus:—

“The following men have been awarded the Victoria Cross for highly gallant conduct in accompanying Lieutenant-Colonel Hastings on the 18th June, 1855, and assisting that officer to bring in, under a heavy fire, from the open space in front of the Redan, a wounded soldier of the Rifle Brigade—Privates Thomas Atkins and Richard Jackson, 155th Regiment.”

Naturally angry at this injustice, he determined to represent the matter very strongly on the first opportunity.

He arrived in town too late that day to report himself, but the next he went to the Horse Guards, and, after reporting his arrival to the Adjutant-General, sought an interview with the Military Secretary, and exposed his grievance. The latter fully concurred in the justice of his remarks, but observed that the omission of his name was probably an oversight of the authorities in the Crimea, and promised that they should be at once written to on the subject. With this assurance he was obliged to rest satisfied for the time, but went away with the determination not to let the business drop.

He observed to the Military Secretary, "I should never have said a word about it, or dreamt of claiming a reward for what any man would have done in my place, had not the two men got the cross

for accompanying me. Mind, I do not ask for it—thank heaven ! I am not like a certain general I know, who when desired to recommend the man of his division who was most worthy of the decoration, sent in his own name ; but all I say is, if those men deserved it, I do also."

As soon as he had passed the medical board and got six months' leave, he went down to Northumberland to see his sister, now his only surviving relation, for his brother had shortly before died in a mad-house, and his widow had gone abroad with her two children.

Oswald ere long found that the northern air was too keen for his present state of health—at all events, in winter. So, after a fortnight's stay at the vicarage, he departed for the south of England. He was not sorry of an excuse for going, as he wished to pay the visits he had promised Captain Meadows on his death-bed to make.

The first place he went to was to Mr. Meadows'—writing beforehand to announce his intended arrival. He had a most painful interview with the old gentleman, who seemed perfectly crushed by grief for his son's death, although that event had taken place nearly fifteen months before, as well as by remorse for his own conduct. After listening to as much as Oswald thought it advisable to relate, with an expression of countenance in which pride vainly struggled to suppress the evidences of grief, he suddenly asked our hero if he had been informed of all the circumstances relating to his son's engagement. On being told that he had, he heaved a deep sigh, and, burying his face in his hands, said,—

“ It is a judgment on me for my pride. It would be a great consolation to me now, if I could forget that it was owing to my commands that the poor girl was denied the only reparation Henry could make her.

I am justly punished for the suffering I made her feel. But oh, good God!" added he wildly, "the punishment is more than I can bear."

Oswald made no reply, for the thought of poor Alice's sufferings recurred to his mind, and made him look on the old gentleman's misery as but a due atonement for that which he had so ruthlessly inflicted. Oswald softened, however, somewhat towards him, when, in a broken, hesitating voice, Mr. Meadows asked him whether a child had been born. He seemed affected by conflicting feelings when told that the infant had died at its birth. After a pause, he said, "I am sorry, yet glad—sorry because I should have liked to have had some one near me to remind me of my dead son, some one also by means of whom I might make some little amends for the injury done to the mother—glad because she is now spared much disgrace and mental pain."

Oswald wisely allowed the old gentleman to continue these spoken reflections.

“Nothing I could say would comfort him; besides, it does him good,” thought our hero.

Mr. Meadows continued, “You said, I think, that you were going to see her. Would you mind giving her a message from me and a small sum of money as a token, of my changed feelings, and that had Henry lived I would not only have allowed, but even have urged him to marry her.”

“I undertake the commission gladly,” was Oswald’s reply.

“You will stop here to-night, I hope. I will not ask you to stop longer, for I am but a cheerless host now, and excuse me for appearing churlish, the sight of you recalls such sad remembrances that I cannot bear it.”

“Pray don’t apologize, I can easily go this moment.”

"No, no, pray stop to-night, or I shall think I have offended you, and I would not for the world so treat one who was so kind a friend to my dead son."

Oswald, consequently, slept that night at Meadows' Hall. When he left he took with him a kind, humble message to Alice, a bank-note for £100, and an assurance that, were it not for the remark it would create, he would send her that sum half yearly, but that he would make such arrangements that, as long as she lived, her cheques to that amount on Messrs. Coutts should be honoured.

From Meadows' Hall Oswald drove in a fly to Marcy Park—Lord Caversham's residence. He had no intention of stopping there; indeed he had not even announced that he was coming. His intention was merely to have a short interview with Miss de Marcy, and to give the message with which her betrothed had entrusted him. Before introducing

Oswald to this fine old Elisabethan house, we will give a brief description of its inhabitants.

Lord Caversham was a good-humoured, strongly-built man ; when in the country, in appearance far more like a gamekeeper than a nobleman, and when in town, greatly resembling a rustic butler ; the difference arising from the two styles of dress he was in the habit of adopting. It is related of him that once, at a battue in the neighbourhood, a dandy, mistaking him for the keeper, presented him with a sovereign, which coin he gravely accepted, and at the dinner that night publicly thanked the donor, saying, “that the peerage was a class which was in general sadly overlooked by the charitable.”

On another occasion, in London, he took it into his head to pay a new wine-merchant himself. The bill, which was a large one, having been duly discharged

and receipted, the tradesman slipped a five pound note into his hand. Lord Caversham, who was not up to the system of per-centage, started at the present. The tradesman, quite misunderstanding the expression of his face, remarked apologetically.

"I am sorry it's no more, but really your master does buy such very cheap wines, that we get next to no profit at all."

Lord Caversham now perceived he was mistaken for his own butler, but wisely kept his counsel, and pocketed the money, to which he considered no one had so good a right as himself.

Lord Caversham called himself a very busy man, and it must be acknowledged he never had any leisure at his disposal. Yet, judging from results, it would be difficult to say what his business could be.

His wife was simply a nonentity in

every other particular save where health was concerned. Her whole thoughts centred in the medicine chest, which was to her what children, flirtations, society, husband, piano, needlework, or gossip, are to other women. In theory, and to a certain extent in practice also, she was a homœopathist, but whenever serious illness occurred, she most inconsistently called in allopathists. She insisted on perpetually dosing every member of the household from the pretty little bottles of globules which appeared to be the chief charm of her existence. Out of good-nature, and for the sake of peace and quietness, Lord Caversham and his daughter swallowed without remonstrance the numerous sugar-plum-looking remedies she so loved to prescribe. As Miss de Marcy used to observe,

"It would be cruel to deny her so great a pleasure, and if they don't do one any good, at all events, they do no

harm; so I take as many as she asks me."

As to the servants, they received good wages, and had easy places, so they submitted without murmuring to "my lady's whims," merely stipulating, and with success, that it should be "considered in the wages."

Euphemia de Marcy was at that time twenty-one. She was polite and pretty, of fair complexion, winning manners, and good temper. Withal, to the casual observer, she appeared a most gentle, affectionate girl. To those who observed her more closely, there was a coldness and impenetrability about her large blue eyes which indicated that the affection was more in the manner than the heart, and that the apparently gentle creature could be extremely resolute and wilful when she chose. She was generally considered excessively amiable, for she made a point of never saying a word

against people, and carefully avoided throwing anyone into the background by intriguing for gentlemen's attentions when other girls were present.

The consequence was that she was, what few women are, a favourite with both sexes. On receiving the account of Captain Meadows' death, she had shown the right amount of grief which the laws of good society require, and continued to feel it for precisely the correct time. Being as we have observed, extremely popular, this very moderation of woe, which in another person would have been called unfeeling, was with her made a merit of.

"Poor thing, I believe she is very much cut up about the death of that man she was to have married, but how beautifully she bears it!"

Such were the remarks made on every side regarding her, and from henceforth she became "a most interesting," as she had been before "a most charming girl."

One or two old cynics, indeed, were heard to observe that it was easy to bear a blow which had never been felt to be severe, but they were immediately voted ill-natured, uncharitable old curmudgeons, who had no feelings themselves, and could not believe that anybody else had any.

Why she had been for three seasons in the London market, it would be difficult to discover. Perhaps, she was one of those whom all admire and but few love. It is generally long before a popular girl marries. Perhaps, with the exception of Captain Meadows, the right man had never yet presented himself, and she knew too well the duty she owed to her parents, family, and position, to think of marrying any one but the right man. Be that as it may, she had never been engaged to any one except Captain Meadows.

Such was the family whose acquaintance Oswald was about to make, not that he

troubled himself much with speculations concerning them. He was about to perform a duty, that was all. Euphemia, it is true, by means of her correspondence, had excited some sort of interest in his mind, but it was only a languid and temporary curiosity, and if ever he did think of her, it was more as a widow than anything else.

CHAPTER VI.

A CASE OF MISTAKEN IDENTITY.

It happened that the very day of Oswald's visit, Lady Caversham, who patronised every thing in the way of new diseases, had a sore throat. It was a real sore throat, we may remark, for while always taking homeopathic remedies as preventative of illness, it was one of the contradictions of her character that though she never fancied herself ill when she was not so, yet whenever actually suffering from sickness she gave full scope to her imagination in naming the disease which had attacked her. As usual, she took globule after globule, without, however, finding herself at all the better for doing so. At length, making up her mind

that she was suffering from dyptheria, she became alarmed and sent off for the doctor.

When a great lady is ill, she expects that nobody else will presume to have need of medical attendance at the same time. Unfortunately, illness is not an exclusive privilege of the aristocracy, and Lady Caversham's messenger returned with the information that Dr. Morphine had gone to London on business, but that his assistant, Dr. Blister, should be sent to wait on her ladyship as soon as he returned from visiting a distant patient. Lady Caversham was much put out ; it can hardly be said that she was angry, she seldom had sufficient energy for such an emotion, but she was violently peevish. Not only had she, in spite of her peculiar ideas about medicine, great confidence in Dr. Morphine, but, though she had never seen him, she had, from description, taken an excessive dislike to Dr. Morphine's

assistant, Dr. Blister. The latter had been an assistant-surgeon in a cavalry regiment, on the strength of which he still wore moustaches.

Now the idea of a medical man's wearing moustaches was to Lady Caversham quite shocking. "Indecent and disrespectful, too, I call it," she was in the habit of observing. The assistant of a country doctor seldom has much to do with the magnates of the county, and Lady Caversham had never yet beheld Dr. Blister. Still, as we have said, he was her pet aversion—all ladies, have a pet hero, a pet parson, a pet poet, and a pet aversion—and she became very angry at the idea of the anticipated visit. As, however, her throat grew worse, her anger subsided in proportion, and at length she listened eagerly for the sound of his approach. Servant after servant was sent to look down the avenue to see if he was coming. Meanwhile the patient, in order to be

prepared for the worst, had put on a clean night-gown to die in, selected another to be buried in, and retired to bed, where she passed the interval of delay in alternately looking down her throat—by means of a looking-glass, of course—and conning over the farewell words which it might be necessary to speak to her family. From these agreeable occupations she was roused by the sound of wheels. With wonderful energy for a person preparing for death, she called out to her maid,

“Run, Evans, run, and bring up the doctor at once, or those stupid servants will be keeping him waiting. You can’t mistake him, he is rather a young man with moustaches.”

At this moment Oswald drove up to the door, and on the bell being answered, said,

“Is this Lord Caversham’s?”

“Yes, sir,” said the footman.

Before another question could be put,

out rushed the maid Evans, all red ribbons and agitation, exclaiming without pausing either to take breath or put in stops,

“My lady is waiting anxiously for you sir and she told me to bring you to her straight will you please to follow me?”

Oswald stared at her excitement, and was much puzzled both at being expected, and at Lady Caversham’s eagerness to see a perfect stranger, of whose arrival he did not see how she could have known anything. But the maid did not give him time for reflection, and on our hero’s trying to give some directions to the flyman, interrupted him by saying,

“The butler will see about that, sir. This way, if you please. Her ladyship is very much discomposed at your not coming sooner. She never can abide being kept waiting, and it’s as much as my place is wuth not to take you right up at wonst.”

Thus chattering, she led the way up the grand staircase, and along a broad passage. Oswald followed mechanically, half thinking he had come to a lunatic asylum by mistake. At the end of the passage was a door which the maid opened, and Oswald, before he knew what he was about, found himself in a handsome room, the bed in which was occupied by an elderly lady. Much abashed, he was about to apologise and go out again. The latter manœuvre was however prevented by the maid, who, as it seemed to him, purposely placed her ample person and voluminous crinoline between him and the door, while the apology was smothered at its commencement by the invalid, who in a querulous tone of voice burst out with,

“ Oh, I’m so relieved that you have come. What a time you have been ! I’ve been expecting you this hour.”

“ Really, I beg your pardon, but there’s some mistake.”

"That's your fault," rejoined the lady snappishly. "Why didn't you leave word where you were going to."

"I assure you I—"

"Never mind that now. Look at my throat," opening her mouth wide, and disclosing to the puzzled Oswald what looked more like an ancient red sand-stone cavern than anything human. "You're only just in time, I fear. If it's not dyptheria I shall be astonished. I've all the symptoms as plain as can be."

"But upon my word, madam, you mistake, I assure you."

"Now don't tell me that. I know better. I've not studied the 'Housewife's Pocket Medical Aid' these three years for nothing, and if you say it's not dyptheria, all I can say is you know nothing about your profession; but you allopathic doctors think no one understands sickness but yourselves. Just look at my throat, and you will see at once I'm right."

She then began to gape like a young thrush waiting for a worm.

Oswald now perceived that he was mistaken for the doctor, and the whole affair, as well as Lady Caversham's persevering gapes, struck him as so ludicrous, that, in spite of all his efforts, he burst out into a fit of laughter.

His would-be patient was furious.

"Have you no feeling, doctor, to laugh in that way, when for all you know I am dying? I declare it's disgraceful."

"Shameful!" interrupted the maid. "It's scandalous, I tell you. Hawful," repeated Evans; "I'll write to Dr. Morphine at once, and tell him never to send you again, I will, I promise."

By this time Oswald had a little recovered his composure, and again tried to explain, but it was of no use. Lady Caversham was, it is true, out of breath, but her maid took up the abuse, and he could not get in a word.

" You call yourself a doctor!" said she
" You had ought to be ashamed of your-
self, you had, to treat a lady of quality
like my lady in this way! If I was her
I'd just die to spite you, and then what
would the crowner say, I should like to
know? If I had anything to do with it,
I'd have you stripped of your gownd, I
would, you cruel, unmanly fellow, you!"

It may be as well to mention that Mrs. Evans was a constant though desultory reader of cheap literature, and had a confused idea that all members of learned professions wore gowns as their official costume.

Even a lady's-maid's fluency becomes exhausted in time, and when at last Mrs. Evans, struggling with mingled indignation and want of breath, stopped, Oswald made another attempt to speak. It was useless. Lady Caversham had now rested a little, and, jealous of her servant's vituperatory eloquence, recommenced.

"If you don't at once apologise for your infamous behaviour I'll write to the 'Times' and have you exposed; you're a disgrace to your profession, I declare, and considering the amount of fees Lord Caversham pays Dr. Morphine, I think I might be spared this insulting conduct.

Excited by indignation she began to cry.

On seeing her lady in tears, Evans, exclaiming, with true feminine energy, "You brute, see what you've done," rushed to the bedside with the smelling salts, that universal panacea for all female emotions; and Oswald, taking advantage of his retreat being thus opened, was on the point of running out of the room. Suddenly the door opened, and another maid appeared conducting a gentleman whom she announced as "the doctor, my lady."

A regular *tableau vivant* now took place. Lady Caversham left off crying, and half raising herself in bed stared from Oswald

to the doctor, from the doctor to Oswald, in blank amazement. Evans, with open mouth, and hand arrested in the act of holding the salts to her mistress's nose, stood by the bedside, her body half turned round towards the new comer with a most ludicrous expression of astonishment on her face. Oswald himself remained planted close to the door, pulling his moustaches with a half amused, half annoyed air, and waiting for the termination of this ridiculous scene ; while in the doorway itself, completely blocking it up, was the real doctor, looking inquiringly for an explanation of the excitement, and the second maid peeping over his shoulders, listening eagerly for something to retail in the servants' hall.

The first to speak was Lady Caversham.

"What does all this mean ?" she gasped out, turning towards Oswald. "Are you not the doctor after all ? and if you are not, what does this intrusion mean, com-

ing into my bed-room, and I in bed, too ? It's awful." Here she tried to blush, but failed signally. "Who'll ever believe that I thought you were the doctor ? Oh, dear ! oh, dear ! people will be sure to say I did it on purpose—they are so ill-natured ; and my lord is so violent when he's angry, what will he say ? He'll scold me, and he'll murder you. Oh, dear ! oh, dear ! what an unfortunate woman I am to have such a thing as this happen to me who was always so strictly brought up, and have never had a word said against me in my life !"

At this point she changed from gasping to crying, and as if suddenly conscious of the indecorum of the scene, popped her head under the bed-clothes, sobbing out,

"Take him away somebody, oh ! for mercy's sake, take him away, or I shall die ! I know I shall never survive it, I'm sure I shan't!"

Oswald made a final attempt to explain, but was at once interrupted by Evans, who exclaimed at the top of her voice, "Get away, you nasty fellow you, and don't try any of your lies here, you great ugly ruffian, a-coming into a virtuous lady's bed-room like a villain of Tarquin, that you are!"

Seeing that no one would listen to him, and only too anxious to put an end to the scene which was becoming excessively disagreeable, he said to the doctor, "If you'll come outside for a moment, I will tell you how it happened," and left the room.

The doctor followed him, and Oswald in a few words explained the whole affair.

His story was received with a hearty burst of laughter, which was however at once stifled, for fear of still further irritating the already sufficiently indignant Lady Caversham.

"But what the devil am I to do now?

I came here in fulfilment of a promise I made to a brother officer of mine who was killed in the Crimea, and who was an intimate friend of the family."

"Oh, I'll smooth down the old lady for you, Colonel; and you had better get hold of a servant to take your card in to his lordship. He's a jolly good-natured old fellow, very fond of a good story, and will only laugh when you tell him of your adventure."

Oswald took his advice, returned to the hall, gave his card to the butler, whom he found lounging at the door, gossiping with the flyman, and desired him to tell Lord Caversham that he wished to see him. In a few minutes the man came back, saying, "My lord will be very happy to see you, sir," and led the way to the study.

"I am very glad to make your acquaintance, Colonel Hastings. Pray take a chair. I used often to hear about you from poor Harry Meadows."

"I have called at his request, Lord Caversham. He made me promise, when he was dying, that I would see Miss de Marcy, and give an account of his last moments. It 'will be a painful task, but I promised him to fulfil it. I have been unable to come sooner, or I would have done so, but naturally I was anxious to visit my relations first."

"Of course you were, of course. Very kind of you to take all this trouble, I'm sure. Poor fellow! sad business, very! Fine property, too, marches with ours. Would have been such a suitable marriage in every way, but one can't have battles without somebody being killed, you know. Euphy was very much cut up about it at first; but nobody ever died of a broken heart that I ever saw, and, after all, I think she didn't care about him as much as she fancied at the time. I wish she'd get married, I'm sure; daughters give one an awful lot of trouble, and I

have so much to do, I really can't find time to look after her. Terrible plagues daughters, certainly ! Have you any grown up yet ? Oh, of course not ; what nonsense I'm talking, you're too young by a good deal. By the bye, I hope now you are here you'll stop a few days ; I shall be too busy myself to do the honours, but Euphy will be very happy to try and amuse you, I'm sure. Come, don't say no, there's a good fellow ; you'll have a lot to talk to her about, so you really must."

Oswald muttered something about a previous engagement. Lord Caversham would however take no denial, and ringing the bell desired the servant to send away the fly, and beg Miss de Marcy to come to the study.

From such despotic hospitality it was impossible to escape, so Oswald, thanking his host, said that at all events he would stop one night.

Before Miss de Marcy's appearance he

found time to relate his adventure with Lady Caversham. On hearing the story, her husband laughed till the tears ran down his cheeks, slapping his knees and rolling about in his chair so violently, that at length it broke under him, and he fell sprawling on to the ground. Just at that moment Miss de Marcy entered, and not unnaturally looked astonished at the position in which she found her father. The latter suddenly remembered the sad errand on which Oswald had come, and endeavoured to compose his visage into a proper degree of melancholy. He did not succeed well, for though his face was quiet, his eyes still sparkled with mirth.

“What is the matter, papa?” said the young lady.

“Oh, nothing, Euphy, my dear; the chair broke under me, that’s all. Remind me to tell Thomson to have it mended the next time the cart goes into Nettleborough.

But, my dear, let me introduce Colonel Hastings to you. He was, as you know, a great—" here the thought of Lady Caversham with her head under the bed clothes occurred to him, and he burst into a fit of laughter which he in vain endeavoured to conceal under the shallow disguise of a cough. "I mean," he continued, finding that laugh he must, "that, ha, ha, ha, ha, he has had a most ridiculous adventure, ha, ha, ha, with your mother. He, he, he, ho, ho, I shall kill myself with laughing.

"Really, papa, it's very unfair of you not to let me enjoy the joke, too! Is it not, Colonel Hastings?"

"Let me recover myself for a moment, Euphy, and I'll tell it you. Oh, lord oh, lord! insisting on your looking down her throat. Ha, ha, ha! You tell her, Colonel Hastings, for I can't—he, he, he!"

Finding that it was hopeless to expect to get any information from her father,

she turned with an arch smile to Oswald, who felt rather foolish at being appealed to, and asked what had amused her father so much. He gave her an outline of the adventure, of course glossing over a few of the details, and suppressing some of the expressions. She enjoyed the story equally with her father, and her soft musical laugh was soon joined to his louder guffaw. At length having exhausted his merriment, Lord Caversham bethought him of Oswald's object in coming; but not liking to touch on it after such a violent ebullition of mirth, contented himself with telling his daughter that Colonel Hastings, who had just returned from the Crimea, had promised to spend a night at Marcy Park.

"Luncheon won't be ready for another hour, so, Euphy dear, go and put on your things and show Colonel Hastings the grounds. I've got an awful lot to do, or I'd come myself; you'll excuse me, Colonel Hastings, I'm sure.

"Oh, certainly," replied Oswald with the conventional polite grin which always accompanies this assurance.

Oswald was not shy, but yet when alone with Euphemia he found it difficult to commence a conversation. Of course the dead lover was uppermost in both their minds, and Oswald, unable to speak on any other topic, was in great dread of the distress his words might call forth. He had previously arranged numerous methods of gently approaching the subject, but, as is often the case, when the time came, they all seemed inappropriate. She also seemed nervous, and for some time the two walked side by side without saying a word. Once Oswald stole a glance at his companion for the purpose of observing the expression of her countenance, and of deciding therefrom on the course to be adopted. At the same instant, though for a different reason, she, thinking him safely abstracted, cast

a glance at him. Their eyes met, and were instantly withdrawn in some confusion; the greatest share of which, however, was felt by Oswald.

The lady was the first to broach the subject which occupied both their minds, and said,

“Colonel Hastings, you have come, I feel, to tell me about poor Harry’s last moments, but fear to give me pain by speaking of him. You need not be afraid; I have long prepared myself for this interview, and time has so softened the blow, that I can now think of him rather as a long lost brother, than one who was to have been my husband. You may think me unfeeling, but remember that we had seen but little of each other as grown up people. It was only about three months from our engagement to his departure for the East. I sometimes think,” she continued dreamily, “that I was mistaken in my feelings, and that

I never really loved him as a girl should love the man who is to be her husband. I thought I did, at the time, but the sort of sorrow I have felt for his loss has often made me doubt since. Don't judge harshly of me," she added in an appealing voice it was hard to withstand; "but one's feelings are beyond one's control. I was very fond of poor Harry, yet I doubt if we should have made each other happy. I confess I am ambitious, and he was not the sort of person to satisfy that feeling. One could rather like than respect him; and the man I marry—if such a thing should ever be—I must look up to."

Oswald hardly knew what to reply to this unexpected speech of Euphemia's. It must be confessed that he experienced a rather painful revulsion of feeling; but still, knowing the faults of her dead lover as well as he did, what he then heard seemed to be only a piece of retributive

justice. He could hardly blame her for not being devoted to the memory of a man who had been so false to another, and not entirely true to her. Perhaps her fine feminine instinct had given her an insight into his character, the result of which she did not care to confess: perhaps she had heard of Alice. Men are very ingenious in finding excuses for a pretty woman. Besides, she had thrown herself on his mercy, an appeal which he could not resist, and after a moment's hesitation he answered,

“What right have I to judge you harshly, or indeed judge you at all, Miss de Marcy, a perfect stranger as I am?”

“No, not quite a stranger,” said she, with a winning smile that completely bribed him to the grossest partiality. “We have exchanged letters, you know,” she continued, blushing slightly the while, “and I have heard so much about you

from my cousin, young Northcote, that I feel as if I had known you for years. So don't talk about being a stranger again, please."

"Well, I won't, since you do not like it, and as to judging harshly of you, I must say I like you the better for your honesty. I can quite enter into your feelings. As you remark, they are things one can't control; but many girls in your place would have pretended the affection they did not feel, and have made it a point of honour to be melancholy, miserable, and sentimental, in appearance at least, till another lover appeared."

"I thought you would not be severe on me, but I confess I was a little nervous, for you can be stern, I know; and I have already learnt to value your good opinion. But tell me about poor Harry, for I think I love his memory better than I did himself, poor fellow!"

Oswald did as she requested, but, with

the inconsistency of an impressionable man, felt almost a pang of jealousy at seeing her eyes fill with tears as he came to the most affecting parts of his story.

“What a shallow flirt!” some of our female readers will doubtless remark. “He pretends that his whole life is influenced by his love for Ellen, yet, whenever he meets a pretty girl who is inclined to be commonly civil to him, he is at once taken with her.”

Well, madame, or mademoiselle, as the case may be, you have reason on your side, we must allow; but please remember that Ellen was separated from him by an apparently impassable barrier, that even to think of her with feelings of love was a desecration in his eyes. He was young, sanguine, and affectionate. He had but one relation in the world he cared about—his sister—and he felt a necessity of loving and being loved, a necessity which his failures had only strengthened. Being,

as we say, young and sanguine, and also of an energetic character, which conjoined with the active life he had led, had never suffered him to sink into a state of morbidness, he was not the man to hug in sullen despair the poisoned dart which had already cost him so much anguish. He had made up his mind at last, that his love of Ellen had been but a painful dream, and he sought eagerly to drive away the remembrance of it by pleasant realities. Ellen was not forgotten, but she lived in his heart now rather as the heroine of a romance than as the heroine of his actual existence. He was one of those natures whose wealth of love must be bestowed on some one. With him love was as essential to his life as the air he breathed. We do not say he fell in love at first sight with Euphemia, but merely that, being denied the brightest, most sacred development of that feeling, he was not averse to endeavouring to console

himself for the loss of a divinity by the charms of any pretty affectionate mortal who, unable completely to fill his aching heart, would yet prevent it from being a complete void. Ladies may rely upon it, that the most constant lover is rarely the man of warm affections. It is the cold unimpressible heart on which a single image is longest preserved.

By the time our hero had finished his story, it was luncheon time, and the couple returned to the house. In the dining-room they found Lord Caversham waiting their arrival.

"What shall I help you to, doctor?" said the latter laughing. "I am just come from my lady's room. She is in a terrible state of mind about her mistake this morning; and as to Evans, her maid, you know, she says she wouldn't meet you for the world. 'To think,' she told me just now, 'that I should have called a handsome young officer like the Colonel an

ill-looking villain, I declare I feel ready to sink at the idea. Wherever my eyes could have been to make such a mistake, I can't think ; but the room was so dark that I couldn't rightly see, and I was that angry at my lady's being put upon, that I didn't stop to look; leastways, I think that's how it must have been.' My lady swears that she could not possibly come down as long as you are here ; but she'll be all right to-morrow, you know. She asked me to apologize for her behaviour."

"I'm sure I am very sorry to have caused Lady Caversham so much annoyance, but it was all her maid's fault, she wouldn't let me say a word, and insisted on taking me into Lady Caversham's room before I knew where I was going. By the bye, I shall be very happy to take advantage of your hospitality to-night, but to-morrow I am afraid I must be off ; I've got a good deal to do."

"Not a bit of it, my dear boy. We don't

get a Crimean hero every day, and you positively must stay and convince my lady that you have forgiven her. I shan't let you go under a week, I can promise you ; eh, Euphy ?"

That young lady did not reply in words, but she stole a shy glance at Oswald, which he rightly interpreted to mean that she wished him to stay. He, therefore, thanked Lord Caversham for his cordial hospitality, and promised to remain for two or three days at the least. The pleased look which came over Euphemia's face would have been ample reward for the concession, if concession it had been, but the fact is, that, coming as he did off active service, Oswald thoroughly appreciated the charm of a residence in a well appointed country house, with a lovely girl for a companion, particularly as the said lovely girl seemed quite disposed to devote herself to make his stay pleasant.

CHAPTER VII.

DANGEROUS ADIEU AND MORE GOOD FORTUNE.

THE few days to which Oswald had at first limited his visit, insensibly swelled into a fortnight. He repeatedly announced his intention of setting out the next morning, but his host on each occasion so peremptorily pooh-poohed the idea, and Euphemia looked so melancholy, that he always ended by giving in. He soon became a great favourite with the household. Lord Caversham liked him because he was always ready to admire his pigs, punch his fat oxen to see if they were improving, and to give credit to his unfounded assertions that he was oppressed with business, though how this last fact was consistent with the expenditure of hours

in talking about it, is a difficult matter to understand.

Lady Caversham was easily won by the docility with which he swallowed an infinitesimal number of globules as a remedy for some painful twitchings which he occasionally suffered from his numerous wounds; while, as to Euphemia, he was good-looking, manly, and a hero—quite sufficient reasons why his society should be agreeable to her.

He seemed, moreover, a man who would rise, and having already a good income in possession, that far-seeing young lady, having arrived at the age of twenty-one without being married, began to fear that she might overstay the market, and determined to take advantage of the waif which kind fortune had cast on that desolate country shore ordinarily so barren of eligible bachelors.

She had also nothing else on her hands just then, and a flirt can no more do

without an admirer, even for a few weeks, than a drunkard without the continual stimulus of the bottle. It gratified her vanity to be seen attended by a wounded hero. He was to her what a pretty lap dog is to an old maid, precious because an object of envy to her companions.

It cannot be said that she felt anything like love for him. She was incapable of the feeling, her heart was no more able to produce such a plant than an exhausted field a good crop of wheat. To use a military simile, as a cannon after rapid and prolonged firing becomes useless, so the heart, after a continuous series of emotions, becomes worn out and incapable of reproduction. Vain and egotistical, she only felt the need of excitement and flattery, thus differing from him, who experienced the urgent necessity of finding some one to receive the love which was lying in profitless abundance in his heart. He was unselfish to a degree, or he would

have thought more of receiving than of giving love.

This being the case, the game was most unequal between them. She let him love her; he asked no more, and was blinded by his own infatuity to the fact that there was no exchange. With him it was an affair of the heart, with her merely one of expediency, or at best, of sentiment. When a pretty, refined-looking, graceful girl who does not love, is determined to marry a man capable of love, and not safe-guarded by another attachment, in nine cases out of ten she effects her object. Coolness of head is as essential in the tactics of love as in those of war; and the greatest blunders in both are made by those who allow themselves to be carried away by their feelings. That the truth of this assertion is not more often exemplified arises from the circumstance that in courtship, as in a campaign, the same faults are often possessed by each of the

contending parties, when of course fortune or circumstances step in and decide the matter.

At the end of the fortnight Oswald was very much in love with Euphemia, and she seemed equally so with him. The young lady understood her art thoroughly. With some men, coyness, occasional indifference, and a few little quarrels would have been useful. There are individuals who require piquant sauces both with their cutlets and their charmers. Oswald was very different from such persons. He was no *blasé* lover. Like the Marine officer Marryat tells us of, who being a hardy fellow could bear a good deal of sleep, Oswald could bear a good deal of love without his heart becoming hardened thereby. He required no bitters to make him appreciate the subsequent banquet, and besides was so proud that, on receiving a rebuff, he would most probably have withdrawn from the field. Moreover, a

sort of feminine instinct told Euphemia that though his love was abundant in quantity it was not of the strongest quality, that it was his senses which had been entranced by the charms of her person and mind, rather than his heart which had been touched by her supposed intrinsic good qualities. She felt, therefore, that it would not do to take liberties with the resolute fish she was bent on landing.

Some may exclaim “How unnatural ! only a fortnight, and not a boy, yet deeply in love.” To this objection we will reply that shut up for a fortnight, after spending two years in the field, in a country-house with a lovely girl for his continual companion, the passion had more time and opportunities of developing itself than would be afforded in three months of a London season. Cupid does not reckon time, like ordinary mortals, by hours and minutes, but by the moments

of unrestrained companionship with the beloved object. Indeed they saw far more of each other in that fortnight, and knew each other better than ordinary acquaintances under usual circumstances would in ten times the period.

As his stay drew to a close, the affair had made so much progress that Oswald's thoughts had already taken a definite direction towards matrimony. That he was thoroughly in earnest may be believed, when we say that he began to watch, interpret, and often misconstrue every word or look of Euphemia's. It would exhaust both our paper and our patience were we to recount the number of doubts, fears, and fits of despair which seized on him a dozen times a-day. This state of feeling certainly did not proceed from Euphemia's cruelty. No one could be more gently kind, more timidly affectionate, more ready to blush at every look from him. But lovers are exceedingly apt at

self-torment, and during courtship display more power of imagination than at any other period of their lives.

Thus torn betwixt doubts and fears, Oswald could not make up his mind even to sound his mistress on so short an acquaintance, but resolved to do so after he should have tested her feelings, first by absence, and afterwards by a little further intercourse. With this determination, he, about the end of February, took his departure for London. His host pressed him strongly to remain till they went to town themselves, ten days later, and Euphemia looked up with genuine eagerness to judge from his face what his wishes were. He caught her glance, and delighted at the interest she displayed, was half disposed to defer his journey, but he considered it essential that he should attend the next leyee; and, moreover, as we have said before, was anxious to see what effect a short absence would

have on Euphemia. So after expressing his deep regret at being obliged to go, and giving an expressive look at her, as much as to say “pity me,” he declared it was impossible for him to put off his departure a day longer, but that he hoped soon to see them all again in London.

The next morning at eleven o’clock he set off. After wishing Lady Caversham good-bye in her boudoir, he went in search of Euphemia. He found her in the library with a book in her hand, which she was evidently not reading, for as he came behind her—she was seated with her back to the door—he saw that it was turned upside down. A beam of sunlight playing on her golden hair invested her graceful little head with a sort of halo; much out of place, we fear, for though a very pretty girl, she was certainly no angel. For an instant he stood gazing at her with a look of devotion and love, which, if she could have seen it—perhaps she did, for there was a mirror

in front of her—would have dispelled all doubts as to the success of her coquetry.

The train will not wait for lovers more than tide or time will consent to tarry the leisure of other mortals, and the striking of a clock reminded him that he must hasten. Coughing gently to attract her attention, he came round to the front of the chair. She gave a little scream, and starting up said,

“Ah! Colonel Hastings, how you frightened me!”

“I am sorry to hear that, for I would do any thing to shield you from the slightest annoyance.”

She remained silent, and looked down bashfully. After a pause, finding that she did not speak, but went on toying with a bunch of charms, he continued,

“I have come to wish you good-bye, Miss de Marcy; and you cannot imagine how sorry I am to say that word. I have been happier here than I ever

was in my life before. But that can matter little to you; I shall be miserable when I go away, but you, so much admired, so much loved, with a father and mother, and sisters, and a happy, cheerful home, will soon forget me, or remember me only as a passing acquaintance. I suppose when I meet you in London I shan't be able to penetrate the crowd of admirers which will swarm around you, and must think myself fortunate if I get an occasional formal bow or nod."

"How can you talk in that naughty way? I am very angry with you, and if you say so again you shan't have even the bow or nod you speak about so satirically. I am sure," turning away her head and speaking very low, "we shall all miss you very much."

"Will you, really? But though I like your father and mother exceedingly, I was not thinking of them; will you, Miss de Marcy?" trying to look into her face,

which she perseveringly kept turned away, and speaking tenderly, "will you miss me?"

A soft "yes" was the answer, and Oswald was so excited that he was on the point of proposing on the spot, but was stopped by the dread of a refusal if he were to ask for her love at such an early moment, and reverted to his first intention of waiting a little.

She marked the hesitation which accompanied this mental conflict, for it was not without a struggle that Oswald could restrain himself, and being a skilful angler resolved not to hurry him. She felt certain that he was firmly hooked, and that it only required a little playing and patience to bring him safely to the bank.

Having with an effort restored himself to comparative calmness, Oswald proceeded, "I shall go away so much happier now I know that you will sometimes think of me. I shall think of nothing else but

you. It will seem so long till I see you again, and all that time I shan't hear about you. I wish you would give me some commissions to execute for you in London, that would give me an excuse for writing to you."

"What are you thinking of, Colonel Hastings? It wouldn't be proper for me to receive a letter from you. But I dare-say mamma will be glad to hear how you are. You might ask her for some of her globules, and then of course it would be," smiling, "only common civility to let her know if they had done you any good."

"What a capital idea! I'll certainly ask her for some; but, oh, how dreadfully weary the time will be till I see you again."

"We shan't be very long before we come to town, only ten days you know, and then you can see as much of us as you like, that is if you care for it."

"How can you be so cruel? You know I

care about nothing else; but I must go now, or I shall be late for the train. Good-bye, dear Miss de Marcy, think of me sometimes, good-bye." Here he ventured on a slight squeeze of the hand, which, if not returned, was at all events not resented, and it was with a warmth almost equal to his own that she said,

"Good-bye, Colonel Hastings, I hope you will be prudent and not over-exert yourself, for you are not strong yet, you know."

"Good-bye, God bless you!" exclaimed Oswald, hurriedly tearing himself away, for he could not trust himself to remain another instant with the lovely siren who had already once nearly made him declare his love.

Before getting into his fly, he, much to Lady Caversham's surprise, and not a little to her delight, rushed into her boudoir to beg for some of the precious globules which had before, so he said (the

story-teller) done him so much good. She was too happy to comply, and in her enthusiasm nearly emptied her toy medicine chest, giving him remedies for almost every disease ever invented, fancied, or suffered. Dear, thoughtful old innocent, she added to her kindness by asking him to write and let her know what benefit he derived from them. Thanking her warmly, and promising to do so he once more took his leave.

Whilst passing down the passage he met Evans, and, as he thought by a happy inspiration, remembered that a lady's maid is sometimes a useful ally in a love affair. The result of this inspiration was the gift to the gushingly grateful domestic of a £5 note. He had already secured the good offices of Euphemia's maid by a similar present. Lady Caversham's hearty voice was now heard shouting after him to make haste, or he would certainly be late. So shaking hands with his

kind host, he sprung into the fly and was driven rapidly off, with eyes fixed eagerly on the library window, where very frankly concealed behind the curtain stood Euphemia watching his departure. Oswald never removed his glance from that graceful form till a turn in the road shut it out from view, physical, not mental view, for during the remainder of the journey he dwelt on her image, and hugged the pleasant fancy that the moment before losing sight of her he had seen a handkerchief raised quickly to her eyes. We happen to know that on this particular occasion the damsel did not dry tears caused by the departure of her knight, but, unromantic confession, merely blew her well formed nose.

On arriving in London, Oswald went to an hotel first, and, then to the "Rag" to look at the papers and eat an early dinner. He thought that a little society would brighten up his spirits, at that mo-

ment terribly depressed from ill health, fatigue, and separation from his mistress. He found the remedy worse than the disease. Every one seemed so rough and coarse after the atmosphere of love and refinement which he had lately been breathing, and everything jarred on his nerves to such an extent that he retired very early to his hotel and to bed. Having incautiously eaten something indigestible at dinner, he was oppressed the whole night by a series of nightmares, in which his lady-love was always mixed up. At one time he dreamt that he was in a cab going to dinner at her father's house, when suddenly he discovered he had left his trousers behind. At another time he thought she had just consented to be his wife, when in walked Harry Meadows, who assured them that it was all a mistake, and that he had never been dead at all. A third time he fancied that she was being pursued by a mad bull, and that, when he

and hast, he sprung into the fly and was driven rapidly off, with eyes fixed eagerly on the library window, where very finally concealed behind the curtain stood Euphemia watching his departure. Oswald never removed his glance from that graceful form till a turn in the road shut it out from view, physical, not mental view, for during the remainder of the journey he dwelt on her image, and hugged the pleasant fancy that the moment before losing sight of her he had seen a handkerchief raised quickly to her eyes. ^{Was lady} It may happen to know that on this particular occasion the damsel did not dry ^{tear to} caused by the departure of her knight ^{uddenedly} but, unromantic confession, merely by her well formed nose.

On arriving in London, Oswald went to an hotel first, and then to the theatre to look at the new play. He would bring

ment terribly depressed from ill health, fatigue, and separation from his mistress. He found the remedy worse than the disease. Every one seemed so rough and coarse after the atmosphere of love and refinement which he had lately been breathing, and everything jarred on his nerves to such an extent that he retired very early to his hotel and to bed. Having incautiously eaten something indigestible at dinner, he was oppressed the whole night by a series of nightmares, in which his lady-love was always mixed up. At one time he dreamt that he was in a room going to dinner at her father's house, when suddenly he discovered he had left his trousers behind. At another time he thought she had consented to be his wife, when it was Harry M. who it was ; at a third, he dreamt that he had never been born, and that he had died in the womb, &c.

tried to run to her assistance, his legs seemed half tied. Thus tormented by a succession of painful, ludicrous, or incongruous images, he passed the night, only towards morning falling into a refreshing sleep, from which he did not awake till it was almost time to dress for the levee.

He was presented that day by General Sir Donald MacTosh, the full colonel of his regiment. The Queen, on hearing Oswald's name, turned round, and asked if he was not the officer who had been so badly wounded, and had distinguished himself so much at the Redan. She was told he was the same person, on which, with a most gracious smile, she gave him her hand to kiss. Oswald, who had never been at a levee before, was overcome with confusion at the notice taken of him ; so much so, indeed, that he gave Her Majesty's hand a most undeniably energetic loud-sounding kiss, and held it full five seconds longer than he ought to have done. Hardly

knowing what he was about, he at last got on his feet, and bowing to something tall in red, who he was told subsequently was the Prince Consort, he was quitting the royal circle, when he felt his head swim round, his legs give way under him, and then all was darkness. The fact is the fatigue and emotion of the past twenty-four hours, coupled with the heat and excitement of the levee, acting on his body still weak from his wounds, had caused him to faint. The noise of his fall attracted Her Majesty's attention, and on hearing that it was Colonel Hastings who had swooned, with her usual kind-heartedness she desired that he might be carried into a side room and attended to by a doctor. He was not long in coming to, and a glass of wine quite restored him. He was on the point of getting up to depart when an equerry sent by the Queen, who had been touched by Oswald's pale face, which she attributed to his wounds,

came to ask if Colonel Hastings was recovered, and to take him to Her Majesty if well enough. Oswald said that it had been nothing but a slight faintness, that he was all right again, and quite ready to follow him.

On entering the throne-room he found it occupied only by the Queen, the royal family, a few of the great officers of state, and the attendants, for the levee had come to an end.

Nothing could exceed the graceful kindness of tone and manner with which the first lady of the land inquired after the wounded soldier who had served her so well. Oswald felt his heart thrill at the sound of her words, for there is not a lady in England who can vie with her royal mistress in winning hearts. She told him that she knew of his gallant exploits and his wounds, and that she regretted that he still suffered from the latter. "As a proof that we appreciate

the services you have rendered us, we appoint you one of our aides-de-camp. Lord Hardinge, see that this appointment is made in due form, as well as the promotion to the rank of Colonel."

"Oh, your majesty," faltered Oswald, "I would gladly do and suffer ten times more to gain your approbation."

When Euphemia read the account of this incident, she was more than ever determined to marry Oswald, and began to long eagerly for the day on which she should see him again. In the same post the newspaper which brought the paragraph detailing the circumstances of his promotion, was jostled in the Marcy Park bag by a letter from Oswald to Lady Caversham, in which he said he had been rather unwell at the levee, and had accordingly taken a couple of globules on his return to his hotel. He wrote, he added, to ask what he should do if his wound pained him again? whether

he should use this, or that tincture? In conclusion, he said, "I know, dear Lady Caversham, you and all my friends at Marcy Park will be glad to hear that the Queen received me most graciously, and has made me one of her aides-de-camp, which gives me the rank of full colonel."

Lady Caversham was a very bad correspondent. She was always asking people to write to her, and when they did so, she bemoaned her hard fate in having to answer them. She liked receiving letters immensely, but, like the diner at a tavern when paying the bill, she grudged the price of past enjoyments. When Oswald's letter had been read over and discussed, Lady Caversham groaned out, "I suppose I must answer him at once, poor young man, though I really am not fit for it. I feel a nervous attack coming on, and I ought to take a couple of globules and lie down instead of writing."

"Shall I write the letter, and you sign it, mamma?"

"Wouldn't that look very strange, my dear?"

"Well, perhaps, it would. The simple plan will be for me to write to him, and say you are too unwell to write yourself. You must tell me what to say about the globules though, it would never do not to answer his questions about them. The consequences might really be very serious."

Glad enough to get rid of the trouble, Lady Caversham willingly entrusted to her daughter the task of answering Oswald's letter. Had she reflected, she probably would, from motives of propriety, have done no such thing; but as at that moment she fancied herself about to become ill—in what particular manner she hadn't yet decided—all her thoughts were taken up with her medicine chest, to the exclusion of every other subject. Euphe-

mia did not give her an opportunity of indulging in that feminine mental gymnastics called a change of mind, but at once took advantage of the permissone she had extracted, and wrote as follows :

“ Dear Colonel Hastings.

“ Mamma is not very well, so has commissioned me to answer your letter for her. We are so grieved to hear you have been ill. I am afraid you do not take half enough care of yourself. It’s very naughty of you, and I shall give you a good scolding when we meet. But I have not yet congratulated you on your promotion. We were all so pleased when we heard of it. I can’t say I understand it thoroughly. You say it makes you a colonel, I thought you were a colonel before? Will you have more to do now? There’s a quantity of questions; but of course the answers will keep till we come to town. Mamma desires me to say that

if you feel any nervous pains from your wound you are to take three globules from the paper marked A. And for the faintness, one night and morning from the paper marked F. Burn this letter, please, when you have read it, for should mamma's prescriptions end in your being poisoned, I should not like to be taken up as her accomplice. I suppose you have got *quantities* of invitations already, and we shall find you quite dissipated. How unfeeling of me to go on joking in this way when perhaps you are at this moment very ill, but I assure you, dear Colonel Hastings, it is not *really* from want of feeling, for *we all take the greatest interest in you*, so pray take care of yourself, and don't go out into the night air.

"Believe me to remain,

"Yours very sincerely,

"EUPHEMIA DE MARCY.

"P.S.—If you want to write to mamma

again about the globules, you must address to Calton Hall, Newisham, Hampshire, after Thursday, for we are going there to pass a few days with the Mordaunts on our way to town.

“P.P.S.—How proud your sister must be of you !”

It is unnecessary to say that Oswald read and re-read this letter till he knew it by heart. Every sentence was carefully pondered over in order to see if there was any hidden meaning. When he came to that part where she had first put “I am,” and then scratched it out so imperfectly that the words could be easily read, his delight was excessive. He was no less pleased with the postscript, which he considered contained a hint that a letter from him would be neither unexpected nor unwelcome. In short, he behaved with as much enthusiastic folly as is generally exhibited by lovers under similar circum-

stances. He placed the letter carefully in the left hand side pocket of his coat, in order that it might be near his heart, and took it from there so often, for the purpose of kissing the precious scrawl, that before twenty-four hours had elapsed, it became so crumpled that it looked more like a neglected bill than a much prized love letter.

After a reasonable interval had elapsed—and by a reasonable interval he understood three days—Oswald wrote again, but this time direct to Miss de Marcy, though he still made a question about the globules the pretext for the letter. The answer he received was even more friendly than the first, and Euphemia did not hesitate to express a strong personal interest in his health, making undisguised use of the pronoun “I” instead of the collective and colder “we.” Oswald’s rapture was overpowering; the only drawback being that at least a week,

—for Lord Caversham had put off his journey to town for a few days,—must elapse before he could see “the dearest girl that ever lived.” He was unable to settle down to anything, and finding the time passing most tediously, he determined to divert his thoughts by running over to Limerick and paying the promised visit to Alice. It had long weighed on his conscience, and he felt that if he did not go then, he should be unable to tear himself away from London when town should be so blessed as to hold Euphemia.

We shall not attempt to give a detailed account of his journey, and of the painful interview with Alice. Suffice it to say that he found, contrary to his expectations, that she possessed all those charms of person, mind, and manner which had been attributed to her by Captain Meadows. She was much affected when Oswald delivered her lover’s dying

message, and described his repentance. Oswald also repeated Mr. Meadows' words of contrition and affection. She received them with tears of gratitude, adding,

"Eighteen months ago I should have spurned so tardy an attempt to do me justice, but now I can remember nothing but that he is my dead Harry's father, and, like me, weeps his loss. Tell him I forgive him." She positively refused, however, to take the money of which Oswald was the bearer. "I do not require it. I have every comfort I care about, but if he will send me a lock of Harry's hair, and a picture of him, I shall be deeply grateful."

Oswald took his departure much touched by the poor girl's conduct, and as soon as he reached London wrote to Mr. Meadows, giving an account of his interview, sending back the money entrusted to him, and delivering Alice's message and request.

As neither the father nor the mistress

of the slain soldier appear again in our story, we will anticipate a little for the sake of gratifying any accidental curiosity which may have been excited concerning them. Alice still lives; she is unmarried, but not from want of offers. In spite of Captain Meadows' treatment of her, she persists, with that purblind devotion so common to her sex, in enshrining him in her heart as a revered saint cut off too early for her happiness and the advantage of society at large. His soldier-like death has wiped out the remembrance of any of those little failings from which, perhaps, even he was not exempt; and those parts of his conduct which will not bear a close scrutiny are simply not scrutinized. Occasionally in moments of depression truth has insisted on opening the door of her heart, and presenting herself in all her offensive nakedness, but she has been at once driven out with the talismanic words,

"His virtues were all his own, and his failings, if he had any, were either the fault of circumstances, or must be attributed to the excess of my love."

Such is woman, even when most outraged, so long as she can lay the flattering unction to her soul that she has been loved.

As to Mr. Meadows, his health gradually gave way under the severe blow he had received, and a few months after Oswald's visit, he died. By a sort of retributive justice his estate went to a distant relation, a most worthless character, who, after a career of something more than mere dissipation, had put the seal to his disgrace by marrying, on the very day before Mr. Meadows' death, a painted *Anonyma*, on whose ill-gotten gains he had for some time previously been entirely supported.

CHAPTER VIII.

A RIVAL.

Two days after Oswald's return to London, the Cavershams arrived at their family mansion in Berkeley Square, and thither at noon the next day our hero, with beating heart, proceeded to call. Early as was the hour for a morning visit, Oswald, who was treated as an intimate friend of the family, was at once ushered by the affable butler into the drawing-room. Here he was left for some ten minutes a prey to the most fidgety impatience, for Euphemia was at that moment engaged in superintending the unpacking of her boxes, and was in a "dishabille," which was anything but studied. She understood her art far too

well to venture into a lover's presence without availing herself of every advantage that dress could give. Had it been a husband, the case would have been different. A judicious delay, she knew, is useful to stimulate an admirer's affection ; but if that delay were too great she was quite aware that, instead of being provoked to greater intensity, his feelings would become exhausted. She therefore hit on the happy medium, and after a hasty toilette of ten minutes, during which she changed her morning dress for one which Oswald greatly admired, she entered the room.

In spite of his previous impatience he shook hands with a calmness which a less skilful artist than herself would have ascribed to indifference. She knew it proceeded from an excess of feeling.

"How well you are looking, Miss de Marcy!" said Oswald, giving a pleased glance at her dress.

“I am afraid I have kept you a long time waiting ; but I was unpacking, and had on such an unbecoming dress that my vanity would not let me show myself in it.”

“I am sure I can’t find fault with the delay, since you have employed it to put on that lovely dress. It becomes you better than any other you’ve got. Do you know it’s my favourite ?”

“Is it ?” said she, with an appearance of confusion. “Ah, yes, I remember now, you admired it one day at Marcy.”

Oswald remarked the confusion, and felt quite satisfied, in spite of the indifferent tone in which the last part of the sentence was uttered, that the dress had been designedly put on to please him. Gratified self-love, and admiration for her, were much increased by this pleasant conviction, and his manner became at once more tender.

“I am so glad you’ve come to town at last,” he said, after gazing fondly at her

for some minutes in silence, an ordeal which she bore with the patience of the angler who waits till the fish has got himself thoroughly on to the hook. " You've no idea how dull and wretched I have been without you ! I thought that the dreadful three weeks would never pass."

" Oh, Colonel Hastings, how can I believe all that ? I daresay you have amused yourself very well indeed. You've got your clubs to go to, and I know you gentlemen prefer them to ladies' society, except perhaps for a change."

" I assure you I haven't been to the club three times since I've been in town. I hate clubs, and I would willingly give them up altogether, if I could come and see you every day."

" I am sure papa and mamma will be always delighted to see you. You are a great favourite with them, I assure you."

" They are very kind, and I am much flattered by their liking me ; but it is not

them I am speaking of, but you,—are *you* glad to see—I mean are—do you mind my coming here? I know you must have such a number of admirers, and I am afraid of being in the way.”

“Now, Colonel Hastings, I will not let you speak in that depreciatory way of yourself. You know I am always glad to see you. The idea of comparing yourself with a set of frivolous, effeminate London dandies. They are all very well to dance with, and that sort of thing, but I like to talk to a man, not a doll in men’s clothes.”

“May I come here, then, as often as I like, and I shall not bore you?”

“If you go on talking in that way I shall say you are very naughty, and shall give you a good scolding; I’ve a great mind to punish you by saying you shall only call here once a fortnight, when Miss de Marcy,”—here she made a little formal bow,—“will be always very happy to see Colonel Hastings.”

" Since you say that, I shall come very often, I assure you ; but tell me, have you got any invitations to balls yet, for if you have I will try and get some, too, to the same places."

" People hardly know we have arrived yet ; but we have got one to Lady Aughrims' ball next Thursday. Do you know her ?"

" No ; but I'll try and get introduced to her."

" Ah, I daresay mamma can take you with us, if you like. We know the Aughrims very well ; I'll get mamma to write and ask her to send you a card."

" Thank you very much. I should like it above all things, and you must promise me some dances. I want a good many, for I shall only go there on your account."

" I shall be very happy to dance with you if you ask me," replied Euphemia, with a demure look, which made Oswald long to call her an angel on the spot.

“ Well, then, I’m very greedy, I want the first waltz, the second quadrille, and the third lancers, only to begin with, mind. May I have them ?”

“ Yes, if you are good ; but no more, or people will be making remarks.”

“ Never mind what remarks they make ; why should we care for what they say ? But, perhaps, I shall be taking the place of some favourite partners, which I should be very sorry to do.”

“ Now, Colonel Hastings, I shall really be very angry if you talk in that way. I have no favourite partners—at least I hadn’t—I mean last year, you know.”

Here occurred a long pause. Oswald was burning to say something which should give her an inkling of his feelings—as if he had not done so already, poor simple young man—but was afraid to risk his present happiness by a premature avowal, which might nip his hopes in the bud. At last he continued,

"Hem, hem! I wonder if you ever give me a thought when I am away, Miss de Marcy."

"Sometimes," said the lady, with a saucy smile, "when I have nothing better to think of."

"I think of nothing else, and you know I—I can't think of you as Miss de Marcy, it seems so formal, I always call you to myself Euphemia; you are not offended with me for saying so, are you?"

A gentle and half inaudible "no" reassured him, and throwing to the wind all his fine plans about patience and caution, he was on the point of bursting out with a passionate avowal of his love, an avowal which she evidently expected, for she slightly averted her graceful head, and with a look of half concealed triumph, began working vigorously at a piece of embroidery which she had judiciously taken up, when at that moment the door opened and Lady Caversham entered.

It was lucky for Euphemia that Oswald did not see the frown which clouded that young lady's brow at this inopportune interruption, or her chances would have sunk at once to zero. Let a man be ever so much in love, the slightest appearance of ill-temper on the part of the beloved object will at once effect a cure. She may be suspected of almost any other fault, and he will refuse to give credence to the accusation; but ill-temper is fatal. As we have said, however, the frown in question passed unnoticed by Oswald, who was too much occupied with his own vexation to remark anything, save that a very ill-timed interruption had taken place.

Lady Caversham was so cordial in her greetings that his annoyance was soon dispelled, and by the time he had regained his composure, Euphemia had recovered hers. After a few minutes' conversation, chiefly passed in questions and answers concerning the benefit pro-

duced by the eternal globules, luncheon was announced, and Oswald was invited to partake of that meal. In the dining-room he found Lord Caversham, who was delighted to see him, and at once insisted on his dining with them the following evening.

After luncheon Lord Caversham asked Oswald, to his great disgust, to accompany him to Tattersalls, for the purpose of looking at a horse he was thinking of buying. Oswald would have preferred spending some little time longer with Euphemia, but feeling that it was important to secure the good will of her father, he with the best grace he could muster, consented. He went the less unwillingly, too, that the horse in question, if bought, was intended for Euphemia's use.

"I am so sorry," he whispered to her as he was leaving, "to be obliged to go, but it is some consolation to think that I shall be employed in your service."

"We shall see you to-morrow, though," she replied; "that is, if you do not forget your engagement."

"You provoking girl; you know I shall not," and he gently pressed her hand, not daring to look in her face to see whether she was angry at the liberty or not.

On examining the horse they found it was admirably suited for a lady, and Lord Caversham resolved to buy it if the price should not be too high. Oswald inwardly determined that, let the price be what it might, the horse should have no other owner than Euphemia.

The next morning he took a Hansom, and drove down to a nursery garden at Chelsea, where he ordered the most magnificent bouquet that money could purchase, to be sent to his lodgings in Jermyn Street, and that evening he took it with him as an offering to his golden-haired divinity.

The dinner hour was half-past seven, and though only five minutes was required to go from Jermyn Street to Berkeley Square, Oswald started at precisely ten minutes past seven, muttering to himself as he got into the cab, "My watch is rather slow, I think," as an excuse for his impatience. As he passed the church in Jermyn Street, he saw that he should be at least a quarter of an hour too soon, so somewhat sheepishly, as if the cabman could possibly know his feelings, he desired him to drive slowly round Berkeley Square before setting him down. When he arrived, he found, notwithstanding, that he was so early that the housemaid was still engaged in "tidying up the room." With a bob and an incoherent apology the latter hurried away on Oswald's entrance, and he was left alone to give those fidgety last touches to the hair and neckcloth with which the British gentleman, particularly if in love, fills up the interval between his

arrival and the entrance of the ladies. His patience was not long tried. He had just decided that nothing could improve the shape and symmetry of his tie, and had carefully arranged and wiped his moustache (why this latter operation, we know not, for we are not aware that he had any reason to expect a kiss) when Euphemia floated into the room, looking like a very incarnation of gauze and grace.

“Oh, what a love of a bouquet! how very kind of you! and I do so dote upon flowers. They are perfectly beautiful. Thank you very much.”

“You need not thank me, I ought to thank you for accepting them. You can’t imagine what a pleasure it is to be able to do anything for you.”

“Well, you really have given me a very great pleasure, for there is nothing I like better than flowers.”

“Will you do me a great favour, then, in return? Will you give me a flower to

put in my button-hole to-night, and," he added in a lower voice, "to treasure up ever after?"

"Oh yes; choose one for yourself."

"Please pick one out for me, I shan't care for it unless it is given by your hand."

"Really, Colonel Hastings, how encroaching you are! If I say 'yes' to one request, you ask directly for something else. Well, I will do what you want this time, but I must take care not to be too amiable in future."

"Don't say that, for I am sure you couldn't be anything else than amiable, if you tried. Besides I have got another request already, I want you to put it into my button-hole yourself."

"I knew how it would be. You really are abominably greedy, and I have a great mind to refuse."

"Please," said Oswald imploringly.

"Well, then, only this once."

As she bent her head, the better to see how to fix the flower, her soft silky tresses lay so temptingly near his face that he could not restrain himself from gently and silently touching them with his lips. The caress, though unperceived by Euphemia, was ill-timed, for at the very instant that unlucky Lady Caversham opened the door. With conscious faces the lovers started apart as if a shell had burst between them, and Lady Caversham being fortunately somewhat short-sighted, they escaped detection.

Lord Caversham shortly after followed his wife, and by the time the usual conventional remarks concerning the weather, Parliament, and that day's "Times" had been discussed, Lord Rochdale was announced. Oswald could hardly restrain his annoyance, for he had been led to believe that it would only be a family party, as indeed had been intended; but Lord Caversham, happening to meet Lord

Rochdale at the club that afternoon, had, without telling Lady Caversham, invited him to join them at dinner.

The Most Noble the Marquis of Rochdale was what is called, in the slang of society, an excellent *parti*, for he was unmarried, and, besides being a Marquis, had at the lowest computation £40,000 a year, and one of the most valuable collections of family diamonds in the United Kingdom. It was whispered that he was wild, but then the London world is so charitable in the case of a rich young marquis, that mammas with marriageable daughters would not believe what they heard concerning him.

"People are so ill-natured, you know, one can't trust them," was the answer to any insinuations. If proofs were alleged and instances given by the virtuous indiscreet, the topic was quickly shouldered off with a "Well, well, allowing he has been a little dissipated, I daresay he's no

worse than his neighbours. If we were to exact testimonials as to morality from every pretendant, I should like to know how we should ever get our daughters married. Besides, young men will be young men. I have no doubt he'll reform when he's once married."

He was in appearance stumpy, plain, and what in ordinary people would have been called common-looking and vulgar; but in him rank made up for the lack of personal attractions. Neither were his manners, judged by the usual standard, either gentlemanlike or attractive; but then who would dream of applying the usual standard to a man who was the owner of the finest diamonds in England? So, charitable and discriminating good society declared that he was naïve and droll, "quite an original, in fact." In short, the world was resolutely blind to his faults, and equally awake to his social and financial merits. What signifies it to

May Fair or Belgravia what a man is?—whether he is honourable, amiable, gentlemanlike, moral, or clever. The leaders of fashion are interested in none of these things. They do not invite people to their houses to amuse or to be amused, but in order to fulfil a fancied social duty, or to outshine their neighbours. They do not, for very obvious reasons, desire to bring merit or morality into fashion. Their only anxiety is to fill their houses rather with people “one meets everywhere,” or with people one would like to meet “everywhere,” and doesn’t.

A man may be handsome, amiable, gentlemanly, witty, honourable, excellent in every respect, and of good family to boot, he cannot obtain admission into the charmed circle guarded so jealously by certain insolent, ill-mannered, made-up, faded fairies, called leaders of fashion, unless he be, as it were, born in the purple, have high social position, or

have succeeded in establishing an interest, not always in strict accordance with a certain commandment, in the hollow muscle yclept a heart of some influential old dowager.

One of the most offensive characteristics of Lord Rochdale was the insufferably confident, nay, almost patronizing manner he put on when talking to ladies. Not only, too, was he confident and patronizing, but also familiar to an extent which would have ensured any other man a severe rebuff, but in him it was set down as only "Lord Rochdale's way," and his apologists maintained that "he didn't mean anything by it." The ladies themselves were to blame for his conduct. They let him feel that the same rules of good breeding by which men in general are fettered, were not applicable to him. He quickly recognised the exception and acted on it. The worst part of his manners, namely, the familiar jocularity

with which he spoke to young ladies, had been acquired by intercourse with the various Anonymas to whom in turn he was in the habit of throwing his handkerchief and—purse. To change suddenly from the tone prevalent in the little villa at Brompton or St. John's Wood to that generally adopted in Belgravia, would have been an effort to our indolent young sultan, and one which he did not feel called upon to make, so long as it was not demanded by the parties most interested, namely the young ladies and their mammas. As long as the latter contented themselves with shaking their fingers at him and saying, "I am afraid you are a sad creature!" he saw no reason for studying their prejudices. As to the young ladies themselves, instead of being shocked at seeing him talking to a showily dressed, good-looking girl in a crestless brougham in the Park or at Ascot, they questioned him with a giggle about his

yesterday's acquaintance, and vowed he was very naughty and improper, displaying at the same time an ill-concealed curiosity about the lady in question.

As Oswald, from want of a lady to take down, had to follow in the rear, he found to his great disgust that Lord Rochdale had already appropriated the chair next to Euphemia. It was some consolation that, being opposite, at all events he could look at her without exciting remark. She, feeling her lover's eyes fixed upon her face, was very cautious, and nothing could be more dignified than the manner in which she received her neighbour's impertinent familiarities. It must be confessed she made up for it in the course of the evening, by taking an opportunity of whispering to Lord Rochdale when nobody was looking,

"You really must not go on in that way when people are here. I am obliged to be cold when you do."

This communication quite exhilarated his lordship, who was an old flirt of Euphemia's, and was becoming both puzzled and sulky at her inconceivable change of manner. She soon had reason to think that she had been a little too confidential with him, for in the excitement of restored good-humour, he exclaimed,

“By Jove, what stunning flowers! Give me one to put in my button-hole, there's a good girl;” and before she could think of an excuse, he had helped himself.

Fortunately Oswald did not overhear his words, but he saw the action, and became, in consequence, extremely cross and silent.

Euphemia guessed at the cause, and inwardly breathed feminine curses on Lord Rochdale for his folly. To restore Oswald to a good humour was her next thought, for if she let him go away angry with her, he might not come again

for weeks, and thus all her plans would be delayed.

The wished for opportunity came at tea time. Euphemia, having a pretty hand, always had the urn brought in, and made the tea herself. On the arrival of the tray, which was placed in the back drawing-room, she went over to it, and cast an imploring glance at Oswald, as much as to say,

“ Come and deliver me from this dreadful bore.”

Angry as he was, he could not resist the appeal, and promptly came to the table. She then dexterously got Lord Rochdale out of the way by sending him round with cups of tea so full that he had to move very slowly for fear of spilling the contents; after which she despatched him into the front drawing-room to look for a scent-bottle which was all the time—she very well knew—lying safely on her toilette table up-stairs.

As soon as they were left alone, Euphe-

mia, looking up deprecatingly in Oswald's face, said to him, "What is the matter with you, Colonel Hastings? You are so silent and unlike your usual self, that I'm sure something has vexed you."

"Oh, nothing particular; nothing, at all events, that will interest you."

"It's very unkind of you to say so, for you know I do feel an interest in anything that concerns you; and I should be wretched if I were the cause of your being in such low sprits. Now tell me frankly. You are annoyed at Lord Rochdale's wearing a flower from my bouquet; is it not so?"

"Well, since you ask me, it is. You can't imagine, Miss de Marcy, how happy you made me by the gift of this flower, and now that I see it was a mere piece of civility to be extended to any chance visitor, all its value is gone. I declare, were it not for the rudeness of the act, I could throw it into the fire."

"I thought you had more confidence in me. I will even say, at the risk of being thought unmaidenly, more regard for me, than to misinterpret a harmless action in this way, to condemn me before you have even asked for an explanation. It's not kind of you."

Here she put her handkerchief to her eyes, rather for the purpose of concealing the absence of tears, than of drying them.

Of course Oswald was beaten at once. Any man but a brute is, when he sees a woman cry. Euphemia had artfully assumed the offensive, after the usual practise of her sex when in the wrong, and Oswald felt thoroughly ashamed of what he inwardly termed his brutal behaviour.

"Don't cry, Miss de Marcy!" The white shoulders and equally snowy bosom continued to rise and fall as if her form was being convulsed with sobs. "Don't cry, Euphemia. I was a brute to doubt

you ; but this is the last time I will do so. Pray forgive me, or I shall never forgive myself for having pained you. I swear I would sooner undergo any torture than see you suffering."

He sought to take her hand—they were so placed that those in the next room could not see what they were doing—and as she did not snatch it away, he whispered, "Say am I forgiven ? Let this be a sign of reconciliation," and pressed his lips to her taper fingers. Far from being angry at the liberty, she removed her handkerchief from her eyes, smiled through her tears, and murmured,

"Yes, I forgive you this time, but do not try me so cruelly again."

How she managed to weep when inwardly her heart was swelling with exultation, is a mystery which no male reader or writer can venture to fathom ; but certain it is that with women tears by no means invariably proceed, as is generally sup-

posed, from excess of joy or grief ; they would seem rather to be the result of a voluntary muscular action peculiar to the sex ; at all events there is scarcely a woman but can cry as easily as a man can whistle.

Enraptured by the insight which, as he imagined, chance alone had given him into her feelings, Oswald was on the point of throwing patience to the winds, and there and then asking her to be Mrs. Hastings. Unfortunately at that moment Lord Rochdale returned to say that the smelling bottle was not to be found anywhere.

“ Have you looked on my work-table, perhaps it is there,” said Euphemia, who saw the avowal which was trembling on Oswald’s lips, and wished to give him an opportunity of making it. Lord Rochdale somewhat sulkily resumed his search ; but the propitious moment had passed away for that evening, and disconcerted by the interruption, Oswald felt that all the words

he had intended to say had left his lips to bury themselves in hopeless entanglement in the inmost recesses of his brain. Seeing him remain silent, Euphemia guessed at the state of his mind, and determined at all events to complete her explanation before Lord Rochdale's return.

"It wasn't my fault, really, about that unhappy flower. Lord Rochdale snatched it from me before I could stop him. As an old acquaintance, I suppose, he thought he was privileged; but I will take care he doesn't do it again. After all, he's only a silly young cub, not worth being angry with."

Just then the "silly young cub" returned, and after a few minutes' general conversation all three went back to the front drawing-room. As they entered, Lady Caversham, alarmed by an isolated and accidental sneeze, was in the act of taking a globule from a lilliputian bottle. Finding herself caught in the act, she

hastily smuggled it into her pocket again, for she had been the subject of too much ridicule not to be somewhat nervous of exposing her medical whims to the banter of such a lively young gentleman as Lord Rochdale. Lord Caversham, with spectacles well up his forehead and with closed eyes, was supposed to be reading the "Times."

"I declare, papa, you're asleep again."

"Eh, oh, what do you say, my dear?" exclaimed the worthy peer, starting bolt upright in his chair, and looking as indignant as if he had been accused of a theft instead of only a nap. "Nonsense, nonsense, I never was more wide awake in my life."

Why is it that people are always so cross and untruthful on this point? Surely there is nothing very dreadful in an elderly gentleman's going to sleep in his own house, when the only people present, besides his own family, are two inti-

mate friends who are amusing themselves in another part of the room. There would appear to be nothing very heinous about the act, yet the slightest suspicion of it, is always repelled with as much energy as if it were a most disgraceful offence.

Nothing particular occurred during the remainder of the evening. Euphemia managed to divide her attentions so impartially between the two gentlemen, and practised the little drawing-room drama of "two strings to a bow" with so much success, that both went away excessively well pleased with themselves, and, consequently, with her.

Oswald felt so happy that he could afford to be civil even to Lord Rochdale, whom he pitied sincerely for not having been as fortunate as himself in winning the affections of so peerless a creature as Euphemia.

"Poor devil, I really am very sorry for him. There must be some good in him to be able to appreciate Enphemia, and he

is evidently in love with her. Well, I am glad I am not he, with all his marquisate and large fortune, for what would that be without Euphemia?" Thus reflecting whilst going down stairs and putting on his great-coat, he did not object when the unconscious object of his pity offered to walk with him as far as St. James's Street. He soon had reason to repent his acquiescence.

"D—d pretty girl that little de Marcy!" said the young cub.

"There can be no doubt about Miss Marcy's beauty," replied Oswald very stiffly, and longing to knock the speaker down for talking thus of his adored.

Thickly enveloped in a mantle of coarseness and conceit, the young gentleman no more felt the rebuff than an elephant would feel the prick of a pin, and continued,

"Do you know I am half thinking of getting married? People tell me I ought.

I believe it's a sort of duty to have an heir, and besides I'm tired of this wild life. I daresay matrimony is not so bad, after all, for a change, if one can pick up some good looking, thorough-bred filly to talk to when one's dull, and to help to entertain one's guests."

"Very excellent reasons for getting married indeed; but are you not afraid that after the freshness has worn off you will be tired of being respectable?" replied Oswald in a sarcastic tone quite thrown away on his companion.

"No, I don't think I shall. You see I've sown my wild oats pretty abundantly, and am tired of all that sort of work. The thing is to pick up somebody who would suit me, somebody who wouldn't attempt to interfere with me, and want to know where I went and what I did with myself, and all that sort of rubbish. I am d—d if I could stand it, if every time I came home late

I was to find my wife sitting up for me in dressing-gown and tears."

"Then the only difficulty seems to be about making up your mind. I fancy you might have any girl for the asking."

"I suppose I could," said his lordship, in a nonchalant tone; "but then it's such an awful bore hunting out one who would do. Upon my word I've known the little girl there for the last two years, but I never saw her look better than she did to-night. I've half a mind to marry her."

Furious at his presumption, for our hero was too new to London society to be aware that a man in Lord Rochdale's position was perfectly justified in this confidence, and yet fearing if he spoke to discover his own feelings, Oswald gave him a look which, as far as intention went, would have laid him dead on the pavement. However, he wisely

abstained from speaking, and as they had by this time reached Jermyn Street, they parted, Lord Rochdale, who was pleasantly unconscious of offence, with a hearty "good night, come and look me up some day," Oswald with a sulky "good night, my lord."

CHAPTER IX.

YES ? OR NO ?

OSWALD had intended going on the morrow to St. Barnabas for the sake of meeting Euphemia, who, like all well brought up girls in good society, was high church. It was not destined to be however, for on reaching his lodgings he found a letter from his old friend, Colonel, now Major-General, Sharpe, who was living in a little cottage on the outskirts of Reading, saying that he was very unwell indeed, and asking Oswald to be charitable enough to run down and spend a day with him before he went to the south of France, where he had been ordered for his health. "I start next Wednesday, so you must come

either Saturday, Sunday, or Monday, if you want to catch me. I have only just heard of your being in London, and not knowing your address shall direct this to the agents." Oswald looked at the date and postmark, and found that he ought to have received it the day before.

"Some confounded negligence of their clerks," he muttered. "What a nuisance it is! I wouldn't seem unkind to old Sharpe for the world, but I must say I wish he hadn't asked me down just now. Let me see, there's only to-morrow and Monday. On Monday I must be at Tattersall's to see about the horse for Euphemia, so that won't do. I suppose I had better make the best of it, and run down to Reading to-morrow morning, and come back early on Monday.

This he did, and was to a certain extent rewarded for the sacrifice he was making, by the pleasure which the visit seemed to give his old colonel.

On his return to London, he went straight to Tattersall's, and, getting hold of a commission agent, instructed the man to look out for a good hack for himself. Having thus, as it were, held out the hope of future employment, he desired him to keep an eye on the horse he intended for Euphemia, and, if Lord Caversham stopped bidding, to bid on Oswald's account against any other candidate.

As he had anticipated, for the horse was a beautiful creature and as sound as a bell, Lord Caversham's agent was soon silenced; and after a sharp contest with a rich stockbroker, who coveted the animal for Mrs. Stockbroker *par amour*, —the actual Mrs. Stockbroker, though very fond of riding, had never been able to persuade her husband to gratify that taste—the horse was knocked down to Oswald for £150. He gave orders that it should be taken to Lord Caversham's stables about two, and left there

as if the latter had bought it. A little before that hour, Oswald knocked at the door, was at once admitted,—the butler being a sharp fellow, with instincts, moreover, quickened by a tip—and was shown into the dining room, where he found the whole family assembled at luncheon. He little knew that during his absence a wolf had been in the fold—nor could he guess how nearly that wolf had carried off his little ewe lamb.

Yes! it was too true, he came not a minute too soon. The bark on which his happiness was freighted, drifting perilously near the breakers, had escaped shipwreck but by a miracle. Indeed, it was even then, though he knew it not, in extreme danger. Lord Rochdale had spent the whole of the Sunday afternoon in Berkeley Square, trying to make up his mind as to whether “the little de Marcy” would suit him or not. From indolence, however, and a conscious su-

periority over the less worthy gender, he had not accompanied his examination with any of those little attentions usually displayed by lovers. Euphemia, consequently, concluded that he had merely come to bestow his idleness on them for want of something better to do. Still, as it is always pleasant to be on friendly terms with a marquis with £40,000 a year, she made herself so agreeable, that he went away half convinced that he had already found the girl that would suit him.

The next day he made his appearance about twelve o'clock, and the result of his visit was that he honoured her with a still greater amount of his approval than he had bestowed on her the day previous. Indeed, about the very moment when Oswald was buying the horse he intended for Euphemia, Lord Rochdale had made up his mind to mention that he was willing to take her for his wife.

He thought it would be pleasanter, and more customary, to make this remark in a *tête-à-tête*, and, therefore, waited patiently for some time in the hope that Lady Caversham would leave the room.

But Oswald's guardian angel seemed to have enlisted her as a partisan, for nothing would induce her to stir.

All this time Euphemia had not the slightest idea of the honour "the young cub" was prepared to do her, for, as we have said before, his behaviour did not give any inkling of his admiration, or that it was about to culminate in an offer of marriage.

At length, as he had a visit to pay at two o'clock at a certain little villa at St. John's Wood, and the affair with Euphemia was not one which pressed, he took his departure.

Oswald came fully determined on that day to put his fate to the test, and "win or lose it all." He was resolved that, if an

opportunity of speaking to Euphemia alone did not occur, he would make one. He took it as a good omen that her face lighted up on his entrance, and became overspread with a slight blush, as he thought, but we, better informed, know, with only a flush of anticipated triumph. He was much gratified, too, at her saying to him in a low voice,

“Where were you all yesterday? I thought we should have met you at church; but at all events I felt certain you would call in the afternoon.”

“I did fully intend to come; but, after leaving you on Saturday, I found waiting at home for me such a pressing letter from a former commanding officer, who is also one of my best friends, that I could not help going to see him. He told me he was very ill, and about to start directly for the south of France.”

“You were quite right to go; it would have been very heartless if you hadn’t.

Besides," added she maliciously, "there was nothing in London to keep you, so why shouldn't you?"

"You're mistaken, Miss de Marcy, there both was and is something in London very attractive to me."

"Really! I am quite curious to know what it is. Please tell me."

"I will presently."

At that moment the butler entered the room to say that the horse from Tattersall's had arrived. Lord Caversham looked astonished, for he had heard that he had failed in getting the mare; but Oswald said he would explain how it was afterwards.

As soon as the servant had closed the door, Oswald, with as much confusion as a young hopeful the first time he asks his father to pay his debts, confessed that, considering the horse was so admirably suited for Miss de Marcy, he could not bear the idea of its falling into other hands, and so had bought it. Should

Lord Caversham like to take it off his hands for £80, he was welcome to do so."

"But, my dear boy, it must have cost you much more than that at the sale; my agent bid up to £80, and was immediately outbid by some snob whom I heard going on bidding for some time after. No, no, I really can't think of taking it."

"But, my dear Lord Caversham, pray tell me what I am to do with the creature. It is not nearly up to my weight, so it's of no use to me. If I have made a mess of it, by buying a horse I find I can't ride, surely I have a right to try and make the best of a bad bargain. Ten to one, were I to put it up again to-morrow, I should not get any thing like what I gave. Come, I know you want the horse, so I rely on you to help me out of the scrape, for I can't afford to throw away £80."

"Since you insist on it, and put the

matter in that light, I suppose I can't refuse."

"Thank you very much," replied Oswald, who sought at once to change the conversation, as if it had been a matter of no interest, but appreciating thoroughly a rapid glance of bashful gratitude from Euphemia.

Luncheon over, Lord Caversham proposed that they should take advantage of the fine afternoon to try the new purchase. He invited Oswald to join the party, offering to lend him one of his own horses for the occasion. Of course, our hero accepted the invitation, the more gladly, too, as he would thus have an excellent opportunity of proposing.

The horses were accordingly ordered, and, in a marvellously short time for a London young lady, Euphemia appeared all ready for the excursion, which she instinctively felt would produce such important results. A lithe well-rounded

figure, set off to the greatest advantage by the most graceful of all costumes for every lady not positively deformed, a provoking little pork-pie hat, eyes sparkling with triumph, and cheeks flushed with pleasure and health, formed altogether a picture charming enough to turn the head of an anchorite, and made our impressionable young soldier more madly in love, if possible, than he had been before.

The new purchase was a fitting steed for so lovely a rider, and Euphemia showed him off to the best advantage. Possessing a steady seat, and plenty of nerve, she naturally added to these qualifications an excellent hand. Ladies ought to have much better hands than men, but owing to timidity such is seldom the case. Euphemia was an exception, and the thorough-bred animal, which would have run away with a rough or nervous rider, was as docile as a lamb

beneath the gentle touch of his expert mistress.

For some time little was heard save continual praise of Euphemia's horse on the part of the young lady and her father. Oswald's heart was too full for conversation. Besides he was busily occupied in arranging, in his own mind, the words in which he should make his proposal.

Of course, not one of the well-rounded sentences so carefully selected for the purpose was eventually made use of—it is seldom that any of them are. Fortunately for his intentions, as the trio entered Rotten Row, they were joined by that intensely selfish individual, a grievance-monger. Lord Caversham saw, recognised, and wished to flee from him, but he had scarcely put his horse into a gallop when a sudden puff of wind blew his hat off, and ere the groom could dismount and restore it, the cause of their haste rode up and joined them. With a

complacent amiability which admitted of no denial, he inserted his horse between Lord Caversham and his daughter, and after a few common-place remarks, attacked the former with his usual weapon of torture, himself.

Delighted at this accident, Oswald determined to profit by it; but now that the desired opportunity had come, words would not. He had long gazed from afar with greedy eyes at the Golden Apple, yet now that it was within his reach, without any one to interrupt him, he dared not stretch out his hand to pluck it. Silently the couple rode along, side by side, till half the length of the row had been passed over. He was racking his brain for a suitable commencement, she was wondering why that commencement was not made.

At last, in pure desperation, Oswald, with an abruptness which startled even the experienced and well-pre-

pared young lady beside him, plunged headlong into the oft-told tale.

“ I can’t make pretty speehees about it, but, Euphemia, dear Euphemia, I love you more dearly than I can say. No man ever loved woman more devotedly than I do you. Tell me, may I hope ?”

She looked down shyly at her horse’s mane, and, turning it over from side to side with the handle of her whip, whispered half inaudibly one little monosyllable which sent the blood coursing like wildfire through Oswald’s veins. That monosyllable was “ yes.”

Intoxicated with happiness, he made a snatch at her hand, and in his agitation pressed it so fervently that she nearly screamed with pain. She restrained the cry, however, and saying, “ People will see us,” at once freed herself from the loving but agonising grasp, and recalled Oswald to a sense of propriety.

“ Bless you, dearest, bless you for that

word! You shall never repent it. If man's endeavours can make a woman happy, you shall never have a sad moment. Dear, dear girl! you cannot imagine how I love you! dear Euphemia!"

This romantic little love-passage was unremarked by the other two members of the party; but the groom was more observant, and in the servants'-hall that night at supper, gave a graphic account of the affair, not unaccompanied by illustrations in which the under housemaid—unwillingly, she pretended—bore a part. Whether her objections to the pantomime were really strong, it is difficult to say, but Tom the groom's tingling cheek proved that, at all events, her arm was.

When they returned from their ride, Oswald requested five minutes' conversation with Lord Caversham in his study. Fathers in similar circumstances generally pretend to be surprised at the communication they receive. Lord Caversham

did nothing of the sort. During the last three days, he had quite made up his mind that it was more than likely that Oswald would propose for Euphemia. When informed therefore that such was actually the case, he simply told his informant that he was very glad to hear it.

"I am not," said Oswald, "what might be called a rich man; but I have enough to maintain Euphemia in the comforts and luxuries she has been accustomed to. In short, I have got £5000 a year besides my pay. Out of this, I will settle £2000 a year on my wife. Though I entered the army as a private soldier, still I am of a good old family. My father was a clergyman, and my only remaining relation, a sister, is married to one. I hope, therefore, you have no objection to me as a son-in-law, for I dearly love your daughter, and I flatter myself she is attached to me. It is only

right to tell you, though, that some years ago, at the Cape, I married the daughter of a retired officer."

"Good God!" interrupted Lord Caversham, with a horrified face, "does the man want me to help him to commit bigamy with my own daughter!"

"I was going to say," continued Oswald, smiling in spite of the melancholy reflections which the topic suggested, "that she died without children within a few months after our marriage."

"Oh, come! that alters the case; but I confess I was startled at first. Well, my dear boy, I can only say that if you love Euphemia, and are well enough off to marry, and she loves you, I have not the slightest objection. In fact, I don't know any one whom I should like better for a son-in-law than yourself. As for Lady Caversham you are a great pet of hers, I assure you, and even supposing she were to take it into her head to make

any opposition, you could soon win her over. You'd only have to hint that she should homœopathise your children as much as she chose."

Oswald looked sheepish at this allusion to a family still *in futuro*.

"I think we had better go up stairs, and see what terms we can make with her," continued the jocular old gentleman.

"Oh! here she is, come of her own account to congratulate you."

And in fluttered the worthy lady, who had just been informed by her daughter of the important result which that afternoon's ride had brought about. Usually so quiet and undemonstrative, the intelligence had quite woken her up. "Well, my dear," she said, "I suppose Colonel Hastings has been talking to you about it. Is it all settled?"

"Yes, yes, I've no objection, and I suppose you haven't either."

"If you're satisfied, I am. You know

I never interfere ; I must say, though, I am very glad it's you, Colonel Hastings, for I am sure you'll be kind to her, won't you ?"

" No fear of that, my dear. Is there Oswald ? for I suppose I must leave off calling you Hastings now."

" I hope not—and, Lady Caversham, you must call me Oswald too. If you don't I shall fancy you don't want me for a son."

Lady Caversham was so much pleased at being treated as if she were not a nonentity, that in a sudden gush of affection she threw her arms round Oswald's neck and kissed him, much to the amusement of her husband, who was not accustomed to see her so demonstrative.

" I hope," she continued, " that this excitement won't be too much for you. You must remember you are not strong yet. Now do," said she, fumbling in her

pockets, "do take these," producing a couple of globules, which she had evidently brought down stairs with premeditation, from her pocket, "now do oblige me, I have given Euphy the same dose, for she was rather flustered, and it's done her good already."

We should be sorry to be obliged to say what were the motives which actuated Oswald on this occasion, whether a simple desire to gain his future mother-in-law's good will, or a sentimental fancy for taking the same physic as his adored; but take them he did, much to the old lady's delight.

"Of course you will dine with us to-night. You needn't dress, for there will be nobody but ourselves," said Lord Caversham.

Oswald thanked him, and then slipped up stairs, for he could hardly realize his happiness, and wished to assure himself, by the sight of Euphemia, that it was

something more than a very charming dream.

He found his lady-love in the drawing-room waiting for him, and, thanks to the discretion of the household, they had a very agreeable *tête-à-tête*, which lasted till the dressing-bell rang. What took place in the interval, what soft “Oswalds,” what loving “Euphys,” what kisses, protestations, and affectionate platitudes passed between them, we leave to the reader’s imagination or memory. All we know is that when Miss Euphemia went in to dress, her tresses were somewhat disarranged, while on the sleeve of Oswald’s coat there were some very suspicious-looking golden-hued hairs which certainly did not originally grow on his own head.

Before Oswald left that night Lord Caversham brought him a cheque for £80. This he now refused to take, saying, “Surely you will not refuse me the

pleasure of giving my betrothed a present."

Lord Caversham yielded the point after a little hesitation, while the amiable and grateful Euphemia, though she did not utter a word, no less thanked Oswald with her lips.

CHAPTER X.

MANY A SLIP BETWEEN THE CUP AND THE LIP.

ON parting, it was arranged that Oswald should come to luncheon on the morrow and take Euphemia for a ride afterwards. He would gladly have spent the morning also in Berkeley Square, but as there was the lawyer to be seen about settlements, and a visit to be paid to the Adjutant-General, who had sent for him to the Horse Guards about some regimental business, the thing was impossible.

The next day between eleven and twelve, as Euphemia was sitting in the drawing-room, writing to announce her engagement to some young lady friends, Lord Rochdale was announced. Puzzled as to what could have brought him there

at such an early hour, and rather annoyed into the bargain at the interruption, Euphemia nevertheless received him with all the cordiality a person of his position deserved. He did not long leave her in doubt as to the object of his visit. After a few common-place remarks he thus addressed the remorseful girl.

“I daresay you wonder why I come here so early, eh?”

“Not at all. We are always very glad to see you at any time.”

“Thank you; but I’ll tell you I ain’t good at making spoony speeches, but I think you a devilish nice girl, and I fancy we should suit each other first rate. I want you to be my wife.”

At these unexpected words Euphemia burst into a flood of tears and sobbed forth. “Oh, Lord Rochdale, why did not you say so yesterday? It is too late now. Yesterday afternoon Colonel Hastings proposed to me, and I accepted him.”

Over the rest of the conversation, for the honour of human nature, we will throw a veil. It is sufficient to say that at the end of a lengthened visit Euphemia had dried her tears, and Lord Rochdale looked wonderfully resigned for a rejected lover.

At the very moment when this interview was taking place, Oswald was employed at Hunt and Roskell's in selecting the most beautiful turquoise bracelet and ear-rings possible, for his destined bride. Full of happiness at the thought of the pleasure which this token of his love would give to her who so little needed, yet so well profited by the aid of "foreign ornament," he entered Berkeley Square at one end as Lord Rochdale quitted it at the other.

Our hero was not disappointed in his anticipations of the pleasure with which he and his present would be welcomed. At least he had nothing to complain of as regards the thanks he received, and fortu-

nately he was not suspicious. He was not sufficiently a philosopher to believe in the axiom which declares that you must gather a lady's meaning from what she does not say, and as in some cases ignorance is bliss, at least for the time, he was as happy as a man who does not possess those two essentials for happiness, "a bad heart and a good digestion," can be.

However interesting to bystanders the progress of a love affair may be, nothing is so tedious as the recital of the conduct of lovers when they have reached the more definite stage of an engagement. We purpose, therefore, to pass rapidly over the events of the next few months.

"The law's delays" prevented the wedding from being fixed for an earlier date than the 15th May. In the meantime Oswald was obliged to content himself with solacing his impatience by spending the greatest part of each day in Euphemia's company, and by heap-

ing present after present on her beautiful and not unwilling head. Neither had he any reason to complain of her conduct towards him. She always appeared so glad to see him, and never seemed so happy as in his presence. If her tenderness was less demonstrative than his own, he set it down to her modesty, and loved her the more for a reticence which he assured himself would be amply compensated for after marriage.

At length the long wished-for morning arrived, and full of the most joyful anticipations of happiness Oswald accompanied by his best man—a Captain Melcombe of the Grenadier Guards—drove up in a cab to St. George's, Hanover Square. Of course a bride of such a position in society as Miss de Marcy could not be married by any less exalted person than a bishop. Consequently the services of the Bishop of Tidmouth, who, only after receiving the mitre, had been discovered to be a distant

relation of the de Marcy family, was engaged to perform the ceremony. The matrimonial noose is well known to be much more difficult to adjust in the case of a person of rank than in that of an ordinary individual. In the latter case a common curate would be quite as competent, but in the former, were any one under, at least, a dean to officiate, there might arise serious doubts as to the validity of the marriage. Besides it would read so much better in the domestic occurrences column of the *Times*. It could not, however, be expected that the Right Reverend gentleman should alone undertake so arduous and responsible a task. It was therefore arranged that he should be assisted by two of the inferior order of clergy, who would thus take some of the fatigue off the shoulders of their superior.

It was exactly half past eleven as Oswald and his companion alighted at the

door of the church, and hurrying in to get clear of the crowd, they found the bishop and his assistants in the vestry, all ready to begin the ceremony as soon as the bride should arrive. Posting himself at the door of the vestry, Oswald eagerly watched for her coming. Five minutes passed away, and she did not appear. Oswald looked at his watch, and began to fidget, for, as they had not a special license, it was necessary that the marriage service should be finished before noon. Since their arrival several carriages had deposited their loads of friends and relations, and at every sound Oswald fixed his eyes on the door, expecting, with beating heart, that in another instant a lovely vision of white lace and orange-flowers would present itself.

But no, each time he was disappointed. Five more minutes elapsed, and Oswald began to feel alarmed lest any accident should have happened. He con-

fided his fears to Melcombe, who was unable to offer any explanation, save that ladies never could be punctual even on the most important occasions.

“ If they don’t come in another five minutes, it will be no use, for it only wants a quarter to twelve, and the ceremony must be put off till to-morrow. It will be awkward about the bishop, won’t it ? ”

Oswald was too much excited to answer, and kept his eyes fixed on his watch, the minute hand of which seemed to move at railroad pace.

At last, just as the clock was on the point of striking noon, a servant in the Caversham livery hurriedly entered the church, and put a note into Oswald’s hands. Cold with fear, he turned deadly white, and his trembling fingers could scarcely open it. At last, he succeeded, gave one rapid glance over the contents, staggered back against Melcombe, and

would have fallen had it not been for the latter's support.

"Good God, Hastings, what is the matter?"

"See," said Oswald, in a hoarse voice, giving the letter, which in his agitation he had crushed in his hand, to Melcombe.

The best man smoothed the paper, and with frowning brow read the contents, which were as follows :

"Villain, what have you done with my daughter. She is nowhere to be found.

"CAVERSHAM."

"What can it all mean? Come bear up, old fellow. I daresay it will all turn out right at last. But do you understand it, for I am da— blessed if I do."

"I know nothing save that I am a miserable man."

"Nonsense, don't give way. Some mistake; a whim, perhaps. Stop here a

minute whilst I go and tell the bishop and the guests that the lady is ill, and consequently the marriage is put off. Then we'll go to Berkeley Square, and try and find out all about it."

Too much stunned by the blow, and a prey to the most dreadful anticipations, Oswald yielded helplessly, and remained seated with his head buried in his hands, quite heedless of the remarks and whisperings going on around him.

Melcombe soon accomplished his mission, and then giving his arm to Oswald, who was scarcely able to walk, hailed a cab, entered it with him, and told the driver to go as fast as possible to Lord Caversham's house. On entering they found every thing in a state of excitement and confusion. In the hall were some of Gunter's people waiting for orders about the breakfast, and discussing the event with a mob of servants, who at the top of the kitchen stairs held themselves in

readiness to make a rapid retreat on the appearance of their master or mistress. The children, unable to understand the state of affairs were playing on the stairs, and their merry laughter smote the ear most unpleasantly. In the study was Lord Caversham seated in an arm-chair, with his head buried in his hands, and apparently quite stunned by the unexpected misfortune which had so suddenly fallen upon him.

By his side stood Lady Caversham with a distracted expression of countenance, doing her best to comfort him. This she did not attempt in words, but by means of her usual infallible remedy. On a chair close by stood the everlasting medicine chest, from which she took first one bottle, then another, from the contents of which she every minute extracted a globule which she pressed upon her unresisting husband. It was fortunate for him that the panaceas in question were of

so harmless a nature, for in the space of half an hour she had treated him in turn for gout, colic, fever, influenza, liver complaint, dysentery, headache, and tic douloureux.

Captain Melcombe discreetly remained outside when Oswald entered. As soon as the latter appeared, Lord Caversham wearily raised his head, and, first spitting out a whole mouthful of undissolved globules, said,

"Where is she? What has become of her. Give her back to me. Oh! do give her back to me!"

Oswald, who had by this time a little rallied from the first shock, tried, for some time in vain, to ascertain what had happened. At last, he elicited from Lord Caversham's broken sentences, and Lady Caversham's incoherent explanations, that at ten o'clock Euphemia had retired to her room, as she said, to dress, but that when at eleven her mother had gone to see if she

was ready, neither the bride nor her maid was to be seen. The whole house had been searched. She was nowhere to be found, and not a soul had seen her go out.

Just as he had ascertained so much, a ring at the door was heard, and the next minute the butler entered the room with two letters, one of which was directed to Oswald, and the other to Lord Caversham.

Retiring into a corner of the room, our hero tore open that intended for himself, which was in Euphemia's well-known handwriting, and with dim eyes read the following lines, which seemed to scorch his heart, as if they had been written in words of fire.

"I am deeply grieved for the pain which I know this letter will cause you, but I cannot help it; it is the fault of circumstances. I had known and liked Lord Rochdale long before I saw and

fancied I loved you. The day after you proposed, he asked me to be his wife, and then I felt I could never be happy with any one else but him. I ought, I know, to have told you so at once, but I was afraid of my father's anger and dreaded your despair, so I weakly put off the disclosure from day to day, till I determined at last to say nothing, but to let circumstances tell my story for me. It is of no use your trying to persuade me to change my mind. It is too late. I was this morning married to Lord Rochdale, and by the time you receive this letter I shall be on my road to Paris. I feel it would be useless to ask your forgiveness. I can only say that, in spite of what has taken place, you will always have a sincere friend in

“EUPHEMIA ROCHDALE.”

When he had finished this heartless letter, which he read over four or five

times before he could believe in its reality, he tottered over to Lord Caversham, and without saying a word, placed it in his hands. The latter took it, and after mastering the contents, returned it to Oswald with the words,

“I can say nothing to comfort you, Oswald, my poor fellow; and if I do not curse her for the misery she has caused you and all of us, remember the heartless girl is still my daughter.”

Pressing his hand warmly in token of appreciation of his sympathy, Oswald left the room and the house, followed by Melcombe, whom he hardly seemed to see, but who did not like to leave his friend at such a moment of trial and despair.

Hardly knowing what he did, Oswald walked on in silence till they had reached Piccadilly, when suddenly turning to Melcombe he put Euphemia’s letter into his hands. The latter, as soon as he read it, returned the epistle with these words,

"I think you are d—d well rid of such a heartless woman. You don't think so now, I daresay, but you will soon."

"Hush, Melcombe; you mean to be kind, I know; but I cannot listen to such observations. God knows she has injured me cruelly, crushed the very life out of me I may say; but still I have loved her dearly. Have loved, God help me, I love her now, in spite of it all, most devotedly. Oh! how could she be so cruel to one who would have given his very life to save her from even a moment's pain?"

"Well, my dear fellow, it's no use talking about it, what's done must be borne, and you are too much of a man, I know, to go on pining for a girl who has shown herself so heartless, so utterly unworthy to be your wife. Good God, Hastings! you ought to be only too thankful that this has happened before, instead of after marriage."

"No, no, I cannot. Once she had been

my wife, I would have loved her so that she should not have been able to refuse her love to me."

By this time, they had unconsciously walked on till they had reached Hyde Park, into which they then entered.

Melcombe saw it was useless, to try and console Oswald, so he let his sorrow have its vent, indemnifying himself for his silence, by inwardly cursing the whole sex in general, London young ladies in particular, and especially Euphemia, Marchioness of Rochdale. At length, when he had somewhat exhausted his indignation, his thoughts reverted to what Oswald should do. After some cogitation he decided on advising him to take that evening's train, and run down to a little box which he, Melcombe, possessed in Aberdeenshire. Thus removed from that worst of all the results of misfortune, the intrusive sympathies of friends, he might divert his thoughts with

salmon fishing, be saved from aught which might remind him of Euphemia, and in time obtain resignation.

In order to avoid the annoyance of re-entering his own rooms, and exposing himself to the observation, curiosity, and perhaps tactless kindness of the landlady, Oswald spent the afternoon at Melcombe's lodgings. His luggage was brought there, and at night he set off by the mail train for Aberdeen.

The next six weeks he passed in the Highlands, trying to divert his thoughts by the most violent exercise. Still suffering at times from the effects of his wounds, he was soon obliged to give up long excursions, and to content himself with passing day after day by the river-side. On these occasions he always took his rod with him, but it was more for appearance than anything else; and but few fish fell victims to his skill. The evenings he found the most tedious part of

the day, for he had brought no books with him, and Robertson's History of Scotland, Isaac Walton's Complete Angler, and Hudibras, made up Melcombe's library.

Before long he had got these by heart, and thenceforth had no occupation at night but smoking, and walking up and down in front of the house, listening to the monotonous sound of the brawling river, which harmonised only too well with his gloomy thoughts.

At length he received a letter from the agents, informing him that the 155th had arrived at Portsmouth, where it was to be quartered.

Thither he at once proceeded, and then for the first time learnt from the congratulations of his officers that he had, at last, been awarded the noblest object of a soldier's ambition, the Victoria Cross. A short time after, he had the honour of receiving it in Hyde Park, at the

hands of the best friend the army ever had, the Queen.

London was full of painful reminiscences to him, and he did not stay there a moment longer than he could help. Even in this hurried visit, however, he received a blow which again opened his wounds and caused him intolerable anguish. Among the crowd of spectators present at the interesting scene, he beheld on horseback, mounted on the very animal which had been his first present to the treacherous beauty, Euphemia. In all the pride of youth and loveliness, and looking as calm as if she had never caused a human being a moment's pain, she was the admiration of the crowd. It was their comments which first drew his attention to her presence. He looked up, and within five yards sat the siren who had bewitched only to destroy him. Their eyes met. He turned deadly pale and nearly fell from his horse, while

even she, heartless as she was, had the grace to appear a little touched, and hastily letting down her veil pushed through the crowd in another direction.

On returning to Portsmouth, Oswald gave up every thought save that of devoting himself to his regiment. Nor was it merely the drill and discipline of his men which occupied his mind ; but everything relating, however remotely, to the moral, social, or physical welfare of officers and men, women and children. Towards his regiment, at all events he had not been hardened by his sorrow. To all the members of it he was kind, considerate, thoughtful, and generous. He was not one of those commanding officers who think that the sphere of their duty is limited to the parade ground and orderly room. The consequence was that he was regarded more as a beloved chieftain than a mere colonel.

This reputation he did not gain by inflicting long homilies instead of punishments, by exalting the men at the expense of the officers, by only taking an active part in the internal government of the corps when it was a question of indulgence or remission of punishment. No, he was no *doctrinaire*, treating the men like spoiled children, as do some popularity-hunting colonels. The best proof that such was not the case was to be found in the fact that he was equally popular with officers and men.

The secret of his success consisted in his unruffled temper, his thoughtfulness, his anxiety to advance the interests of those under his command, and the strict impartiality of his conduct towards offenders. Every man not only felt that temper would have no part in any punishment that he might receive, and that certain offences would be followed by

certain punishments as regularly as the thunder succeeds the lightning.

Another reason for the love borne him, was that in all duty matters he was the same to-day as yesterday, and the conviction that, to use an old proverb, "What was fish to this would not be flesh to that man."

It is a mistake to think that it is severity which renders a commanding officer unpopular. Such is not the case. What makes an officer liked is equality of treatment and the absence of fidgettiness. With the officers he possessed another charm.

A strict disciplinarian on duty, he was off parade their comrade. In all societies, some deference is paid to a certain rank, but that need never interfere with a perfect freedom of private intercourse. The position which is not perpetually asserted is generally readily granted, and at all times Oswald was

treated with perfect respect. There were no hushed voices, there was no changed conversation, when he entered the room; there were no vacant chairs next him at mess.

It is not difficult to be a popular commanding officer. Yet how few are so! The happiness of everybody in a regiment depends on the colonel, and it costs him very little pains to bestow it. Yet how rare it is, comparatively speaking, to find a universally popular commanding officer. Those officers who, as Captains or Majors, give every promise of being so, seem, as soon as they reach the top, unaccountably to change their natures.

The reason we suppose is that few minds are so constituted as to resist the intoxication consequent on the sudden possession of great power. But a truce to this military moralizing.

Kind and even amiable to his regiment,

Oswald was by no means popular in general society. Young ladies in particular, who were exceedingly anxious to console the rich, handsome, distinguished young colonel for the ill-treatment he had received at the hands of one of their sex, found him most disagreeable. Not that he was ever wanting in outward politeness, but they soon discovered that he had lost all respect for women, and the cold sarcastic manner in which he received their advances caused him to be considered, both by the baffled damsels and their enraged parents, as "an unfeeling, disagreeable man." "My dear," they would say, "I'm sure I'm not surprised at Lady Rochdale throwing him over."

Time works miracles. It alleviates, if it does not cure, the pain of the deepest wounds, and before the close of the year, Oswald had brought himself to look on his disappointment as a bitter though providential draught. His mind had regained

a healthy tone, and though the wound was as yet only skinned over, it no longer rankled as it had done. That domestic happiness was for him a forbidden luxury he felt certain, but at the same time he recognised the fact that, even without a loving wife and comfortable home, life had still some lesser pleasures in store for him who did not obstinately refuse to seek them.

CHAPTER XI.

COALS OF FIRE.

AN event occurred about this time which tended to carry back his thoughts from the recent to the more remote past. Taking up the *Times* one morning at breakfast, his eye fell on a paragraph which moved him more than he could have believed possible. His stunned heart seemed to recover its power, and though the emotions excited were painful, they were healthier and more preferable than the dull absence of feeling with which he had lately regarded everything and person connected with his regiment.

The paragraph in question was headed, “Another commercial failure,” and in words of an exhausting number of syllables,

informed the public that John Kirkman, Esq., of Hastings Park, near Puddlecombe, having engaged in some reckless speculations in foreign mines, had just failed for an enormous sum. It was added, however, that it was hoped that by the sale of his estate and extensive iron works the creditors would eventually be able to satisfy the claims of his creditors in full.

Immediately on hearing this, Oswald got a week's leave and hastened down to Puddlecombe, which place he had never seen since he left it, a poor and friendless youth, to enlist as a private soldier in the very regiment he now commanded. On his arrival he put up at the principal inn, and after dinner called in the garrulous landlord with a view of ascertaining how far the news of Mr. Kirkman's ruin was true. A catastrophe in a little country town like Puddlecombe, is a perfect god-send, and Oswald found that Boniface was quite as

eager to answer as he was to question.

From his conversation it appeared that the story of the failure was quite true, and that the park would certainly be shortly sold by public auction. Oswald learnt, moreover, that Mr. Kirkman was not the only member of the family who would suffer by his imprudence, for he had persuaded his son-in-law, Major—now Colonel—Falconer, to place both his own small capital and Mrs. Falconer's dowry in his hands, in the hope of getting that high interest which the late Duke of Wellington declared to be only another name for bad security.

"It's a mortal pity, sir, for the Colonel won't recover a farthing of it, and misfortunes never come single, sir, as they say, for Lord Fitz Fluke, the Colonel's brother, you know, sir, has spent every farthing of his own money except a small entailed estate, and, what is worse, has married some gay girl or another, and by

to-day's paper I see she's got a son. So the poor Colonel has nothing to hope from there."

Much distressed at the sad future which seemed to be before Ellen, who had up to this crash every reason to believe herself a rich heiress, Oswald, to cover his emotion said,

"Poor Mrs. Kirkman how does she bear it."

"Lord bless you, sir, she's been dead these twelve months. She was as healthy a woman as any in these parts once, but she had nothing to do like, so she took to fancying herself what they call a hydrophobic, and took such a heap of doctor's stuff that at last she got really ill and died."

That very evening, Oswald wrote a letter to Mr. Kirkman, which was carried up to the park the first thing next morning. In it an interview on a matter of the greatest importance was requested. Mr. Kirkman was greatly puzzled to think

what the writer could want of him. Still at such a moment anything was accepted as a welcome distraction from the remorseful thought which racked his bosom. In the course of the morning a note was brought to Oswald which said that Mr. Kirkland would be very happy to see Colonel Hastings. It was with strange tumultuous memories of a bright youth, now alas half erased by and mingled with the various sad incidents of an eventful life, that Oswald entered, as a rich and honoured visitor, the house from which a few short years before he had been ignominiously driven forth as a presumptuous pauper. Mr. Kirkman was so much changed by time, care, and misfortune, that Oswald would not have been able to recognise him under any other circumstances; while in Colonel Hastings Mr. Kirkman had no idea that he beheld the friendless lad whom he had so ill-rewarded for saving his daughter's life.

For a moment Oswald was so taken up with the shadows of memory suggested by everything around him, that he scarcely, after the first bow, noticed the master of the house, who vainly pointed to a seat. Recovering himself at length he said.

“ Do you not recollect me, Mr. Kirkman ; do you not remember Oswald Hastings.” Mr Kirkman first stared, then grew very red, but managed to stammer out,

“ God bless me, so it is !”

“ We did not part on very good terms, Mr. Kirkman ; but I daresay you acted as seemed to you best for your daughter’s interest. At any rate, I have forgotten any little unpleasantness which may have existed, and only remember your previous kindness. I am so very sorry to hear of your misfortune.”

“ You are very kind,” faltered forth Mr. Kirkman, quite broken down by his losses, and completely subdued by Oswald’s unexpected behaviour. “ I do not deserve

it, but you are a noble fellow, and—and—I fear I behaved very badly to you."

"Don't let us talk about that any more. I came here with a view of proposing an arrangement which may probably suit us both. I am now tolerably well off; indeed, I may say rich, for a person of my habits. I was left some money by a friend a few years ago, and since then my investments have been so judiciously made by my lawyer, that my income has nearly doubled.

"I am told that this estate will have to be sold. You know it once belonged to my ancestors; so I am naturally anxious to buy it. The difficulty is that my home being my regiment, I should not be able to live here and look after the property. Now, I have a great dislike to seeing a large house like this occupied by people who could take no interest in the tenants, which would be probably the case if I were to let it. You can help me in this matter,

by renting it of me, and would be thus doing me a great favour."

"But, my dear Sir," replied Mr. Kirkman rather peevishly, "you forget that I have not the means of renting it of you, I am nothing better," here he gave a bitter laugh, "than a pauper; not only all my own money is gone, but all I gave my daughter, and which her husband was fool enough to let me speculate with."

"I know all that, but I want you to look on the affair as a mere matter of business. I can't expect you to look after the property for nothing, I believe it brings in some £5,000 a year does it not?"

"Yes."

"Then I'll let you have the place at a rent of £3,000, on condition that you make your daughter an allowance of £400 a year, for I will not conceal from you that I still entertain a great regard for her. Of course, you will promise to keep this transaction a strict secret."

"I will do whatever you tell me. Have you not saved me from a workhouse and lessened the remorse I feel about poor Ellen? I do not deserve such treatment, you are a splendid fellow, and I wish Ellen had married you instead of Falconer. Not that he is actually unkind, but he's very violent at times, especially when he's jealous. I don't think Ellen feels now much more than duty for him; and that d—d scoundrel, FitzFluke, has just got a son, and cut her out of being my lady, poor girl!"

Having arranged matters so satisfactorily, Oswald wrote to his solicitor to see about the purchase of the estate on the best terms he could. Having done this, he spent the remainder of the short afternoon in visiting his father and mother's tomb, and in going over the parsonage, where he had spent so many happy years.

That evening he was surprised by a

visit from the mayor, who, after a complimentary preamble, said that several of the chief inhabitants, on hearing of his arrival, were anxious to give a dinner to one who had brought so much honour on his native place by his brilliant and distinguished conduct in the Crimea. He stated that, in consequence of this desire, he had come to invite Oswald to a dinner to be given in his honour at the Cat and Candlestick two days hence. They were afraid, the Mayor added, that owing to this short notice many of the neighbouring gentry would be unable to be present, and also that the banquet would be less splendid than they could wish, but they were aware that his stay must necessarily be short, and had named an early day in order to study his convenience.

Oswald would fain have excused himself, but the mayor was so pressing, remarking that if he refused, people would say he was proud, that at last he yielded. Oswald,

moreover, was not sorry to spend a little more time in the dear old town, and to renew his acquaintance with some former friends. Besides, it was a little gratification to his pride to be thus feted in a place which he had quitted in so humble a capacity.

Perhaps also a thought of what both Euphemia and Ellen would think when they heard of it, may have had something to do with his decision, though, when this was suggested to him by the writer of these pages, he refused to admit the impeachment.

In due course the dinner took place, and passed off with great success. What was eaten, drunk, said, and done, how the freedom of the city, conferring on him the valuable privilege of selling tin kettles, boots, or cheese within the borough, was presented in a showy gold box and with a florid speech, how several of the neighbour-

ing magnates spoke with emotion of a friendship which had been by no means apparent when he was poor and obscure, all this, we say, must be imagined.

These sort of scenes have been so frequently described, that we shall not inflict an account of the Puddlecombe banquet on our readers. Yet there was more reason for it than most of the conventional ovations so common just then. Oswald was really a hero, not one made up for the nonce, or puffed off by partial relations, as occurred in one instance during one of the wars at the Cape. In the latter case, a respectable but imaginative Irish gentleman, with great ostentation caused masses to be said for the repose of the souls of the Kaffirs slain by his doughty son, said hero having been safely ensconced at Cape Town throughout the campaign.

Two years had passed away in different quarters in England, when our hero re-

ceived the intelligence that Mr. Kirkman had died of typhus fever, and that Colonel Falconer, who was stopping in the house at the time, had caught the disease from him, and had likewise been carried off by it. Not a post did Oswald delay in writing a letter of condolence to the widow, begging her also to continue to occupy Hastings Park on the same terms as her father. He put the matter as delicately as possible, made it a favour to himself, and urged the same arguments as those which he had used with Mr. Kirkman.

He, however, feared that he should, not this time, be as successful as on the former occasion, and the event proved he was correct. By return of post, a letter from Ellen reached him, in which, after thanking him warmly for his kind, generous thoughtfulness, she positively declined his offer. She insinuated that, as a woman, the circumstances were quite different, and that their mutual position rendered it

impossible that she should accept his bounty. Far more delicate in mind than her father, she hesitated not to show that she saw through Oswald's pretence of its being a matter of business and of a service to him.

The letter was so decided in tone, that it admitted of no appeal, and Oswald felt tempted to curse the riches which he was not allowed to expend in the only manner which could bring him any gratification.

What distressed him still more was the information which he received from Ellen's agents, that she had nothing but her pension, that of a Captain's widow, for Lieutenant-Colonel Falconer only possessed brevet-rank, the few hundreds which her husband and father had saved since the failure being employed in paying off debts which had hitherto been overlooked; so that, beyond £50 a year, Ellen had nothing. It is true that she had no children, still even without a family, £50 a

year is sadly insufficient for the support of one who had hitherto lived as a lady. It was, however, plain that nothing remained to be done, and Oswald was obliged to look on his helplessness in this particular as one of the many evils with which that envious jade, fortune, tries to counterbalance with one hand the gifts which she has bestowed with the other.

CHAPTER XII.

AN UNEXPECTED MEETING.

A YEAR and a half after Colonel Falconer's death, the 155th received orders to embark for Canada, and in due course sailed for their destination. Some important private business just then required Oswald's presence in England, and he consequently obtained leave to follow a month later. His affairs arranged, he embarked at Liverpool on board one of the Cunard steamers. The ship was crowded with passengers, but Oswald had become more reserved and gloomy than ever, and did not seek to ascertain their names.

For the first two days the weather was extremely rough, consequently but few people left their cabins. On the third

day the weather moderated, and on the fourth the sea was as calm as a duck pond. The fine weather brought the ladies on deck, just as a sunny day arouses hundreds of insects from their previous torpor. Oswald was standing by the wheel, looking astern, when suddenly he heard a lady's voice addressing apparently a wilful child who was asking for something which could not be granted. The tone seemed familiar to him, and he turned round to see from whom it proceeded. In a sitting posture on the deck, leaning against the skylight, was a lady in black with two little girls, one on each side of her, who were entreating her to let them go down on the quarter deck. What she replied was said in so low a voice that it did not reach Oswald's ears ; but by the movement of her head he could see that she refused. The lady's face was shrouded from observation by a thick veil, while she was so enveloped in shawls and wrappers that he could

not make out her figure. Though unable to see what she was like, the sound of her voice haunted him. There was something in it which reminded him of Ellen's, only it was fuller and richer than hers. Turning to the Captain, who stood close by, he asked if he knew who that lady was.

"Oh, she's Mrs. Colonel Smart's governess. I think her name is Mrs. Weldon; yes, I am sure it is, I remember seeing it on one of her boxes."

"Ah, indeed," said Oswald, half disappointed, though he knew not why, and again turning towards the stern he stood for half an hour watching listlessly the white track left by the vessel. During that time his thoughts ranged back over the whole of his past life, and every scene and incident came as vividly before him as if he had beheld them in a panorama. The adventure with the mad dog, Ellen's face as she thanked him for saving her, the scene in the private theatre when he told

her his love, the moment of their meeting at Plymouth; all these in particular suggested to him by the fancied resemblance of the governess's voice to that of his first love, presented themselves with painful distinctness to his mind's eye.

"Why should I, after all, not marry her? A reasonable period has now elapsed since the death of her husband; and I don't think she cared for him very much. Probably forced into marriage by her father, who was helped by her *pique* at hearing that I had married. Why should I not now ask her to be my wife? 'Tis true her agents have never been able to give me her address, or don't choose to do so; but with money one can find out anything. Fool that I was not to think of that before, instead of sitting down paralysed by my misfortunes. As soon as I arrive I will write to my lawyer to employ a private detective, and if I find out where

she is, I will, at all events, make a last attempt to secure happiness."

Thus reasoned Oswald, and turning away from the stern with a sigh, he began abstractedly to pace the deck, without noticing that each time he passed within a yard of the lady in black, the sight of whom had first suggested this train of thought, she, too, observed him as little. Exhausted apparently by sea-sickness, she lay back, her veil now raised, but her eyes closed as if meditating or asleep.

At last overcome by the pain of his reflections, when he thought of what might have been, he, just as he approached Mrs. Weldon, exclaimed unconsciously,

"Oh ! Ellen, Ellen !"

At these words the lady suddenly opened her eyes, looked up, and gave a little shriek. Oswald turned at the sound, and sitting almost at his feet, with a face suffused with blushes, was his own first love, Ellen Falconer.

"Good Heavens! what a strange coincidence!" exclaimed Oswald, as soon as he was able to speak. "How are you here, and why did the Captain say you were called Mrs. Weldon?"

"My name now is Mrs. Weldon," with a meaning look towards the children, "and I am governess to Mrs. Smart. My dears, I wish you would go and ask nurse to take care of you for a little while. This gentleman is an old friend of mine, and I want to talk to him."

The children did as they were bid, and Ellen seized the opportunity of telling Oswald that, finding it impossible to live like a lady on £50 a year, she had taken a place as governess, and was now on her way to Quebec, where Colonel Smart was stationed with his regiment.

"It is not a pleasant occupation, still Mrs. Smart is kind to me, and as to my wages," said she with rather a bitter smile, "I have no reason to complain, for I

receive £30 a year, and a first rate kitchen-maid does not get more, you know, so I ought to be satisfied. I intend to save all I can, and then to settle down by myself in some quiet place, where I shall meet none of my old acquaintances."

Oswald had too much delicacy to say a word about her refusal to agree to the generous offer he had made her, but it rankled in his heart to think that, rather than owe anything to him, she should have accepted an office which she evidently loathed.

She continued, "I daresay you will think it very weak; but I could not bear that the name I had borne in prosperity should be the appellation of one who is after all only a servant, so I call myself Mrs. Weldon; but we must not talk any more now, or people will make remarks, and I shall be turned off."

Notwithstanding this fear, Oswald con-

trived by cultivating Mrs. Smart, and making friends with the children, to enjoy many conversations with Ellen, who seemed well enough disposed to talk to him as a friend, but at once put a stop to any attempt at playing the lover.

This conduct only added fuel to his passion, and indeed she was even more calculated to inspire love than when he had first laid himself at her feet. Girl she was no longer; the first bloom of youth had passed away never to return, but in its place had come that womanly development of form and face which is so often seen in England, and is even more attractive than the girlish prettiness which has preceded it. Her features too, were more formed; her eyes possessed more soul, and her voice had become fuller and richer.

Oswald felt all the ardour of his boyhood's love in redoubled force, and it maddened him to think that he must

bury it in his own breast. He pondered deeply over the matter, and at last decided that Ellen's behaviour proceeded less from love for her dead husband, than the remembrance of his own apparent faithlessness to her. The circumstances under which this faithlessness had occurred, she gave him no opportunity of relating, and without explaining these, there was evidently no chance of success.

At length, after watching in vain for an opportunity, he obtained it, when one evening, after dinner, Mrs. Smart and Ellen were sitting on deck. Purposely enlarging upon the tedium of a sea voyage, he succeeded in getting Mrs. Smart to ask him to tell them some story. He pretended at first to hesitate, but not so much as to show any great obduracy, and in the end yielded.

“ Since you insist upon it, Mrs. Smart,

I must do my best, but I am a very bad hand at this sort of thing. What sort of story shall it be, a true story, or one out of my own head, as the children say?"

"Oh, a true one by all means. You have seen so much, Colonel Hastings, that I am sure you cannot find any difficulty in obliging us."

"Well then, I'll tell you a sad history of an officer in my own regiment."

Quite unsuspiciously Ellen prepared to listen to some tale of love or war concerning an unknown person who could scarcely be more real to her than the hero in the last new novel.

Giving some fictitious names, and adding some additional matter, Oswald gave an eloquent and touching account of his own love for Ellen, of how he had thought she had forgotten him, and of how honour and humanity had combined to induce him to marry Mary.

In the course of his story, he dwelt at great length on the state of his own feelings, and wound up by describing the unfortunate lover's cruel treatment by the original lady of his love.

When he had concluded, he asked his auditors what they thought of the matter. Mrs. Smart declared that the lady ought to marry him. Ellen would give no opinion, saying that it was impossible to judge as to what a woman should do in such a case, for so much depended on circumstances.

Notwithstanding this evasive and somewhat meaningless answer, Oswald felt he had made an impression. Several times did her eyes fill with tears during his recital, and when it was completed she seemed buried in thought.

After a time she roused herself, and availing herself of a lady's customary, and admitted, conventional falsehood, pleaded a headache, and retired to her cabin,

from which she did not emerge during the rest of the day.

About midnight the wind began to rise, and soon swelled into a violent gale. This continued during the whole of the following day, but moderating at sunset, towards ten o'clock, completely subsided. The sea, however, was still very rough, and the motion of the vessel caused almost all the ladies to suffer dreadfully from sea-sickness. Among these most severely afflicted in this way was poor Ellen. She was so completely prostrated as to feel the utmost indifference as to whether the ship went to the bottom or not.

That night Oswald was walking the deck smoking a cigar, and meditating over the best course to be adopted on his next seeing Ellen. Decisive action was necessary, for they were approaching land, and in a few days he and Ellen would be separated; he to go to Montreal, where his regiment was quartered, she to pro-

ceed to Quebec. Anxious to know how much time was left him, he asked the Captain when he thought they should arrive.

"We ought to make the land at daylight; indeed we might see it about half past four, but the night is so dark, and there's such a fog coming on, that I doubt if we shall be able to see the light."

"Are you going to slacken speed then?"

"At two I shall, but it wants more than an hour and a half to that now."

Leaning back against the taffrail Oswald peered abstractedly into the thick gloom, through which the ship was cleaving her way, as if trying to see some light which might serve as a beacon for his own anxious path.

He had stood thus some three quarters of an hour, when, as the ship rose with a heavier swell than usual, he thought he saw a dark mass looming for an instant in the distance. It was but for

an instant, and he thought his eyes must have deceived him. Still it might be as well to tell the Captain, so he walked aft for that purpose. He had not taken four paces when a terrible cry came from the look-out man on the fore castle, "Breakers ahead!" The Captain at once shouted to reverse the engines, but the words had scarcely left his mouth when a sudden shock was felt which nearly threw everybody on deck down, and made the ship quiver from stem to stern. Another and another strong concussion was felt as the swell washed the steamer further on to the ledge of the rocks, on which she had evidently struck. After three great heaves the vessel seemed to be comparatively steady, merely a continual grinding and pounding going on. All this occurred in less time than we have required to tell it. At the first shock, the Captain exclaimed in a voice of anguish, "God preserve us, she has

struck!" and a terrible wail, like the groan of an imprisoned monster, was sent up simultaneously by the crew.

Notwithstanding the fearful nature of their peril, the Captain did not lose his presence of mind, but gave out his orders with the utmost coolness. As soon as he saw what had happened, Oswald ran down to the saloon, which he found full of men, women, and children, half clothed, as they had hastily sprung from their beds. Some were shrieking, others weeping silently, others praying, one or two making for the companion ladder, and a few rapidly throwing on a few articles of dress, and collecting whatever of most valuable property they could lay their hands on. Husbands were calling for their wives, wives for their husbands, parents for their children, and children for their parents. In short, everything was in a state of confusion. Oswald's first step was to shout,

"Silence, everybody," and when the clamour had a little subsided, he added, "We have struck on a rock; but if you will be quiet, and do what the captain tells you, every one, by God's mercy, will be saved. Let each person collect his party and remain here till called on deck. If you go up now, you will interfere with the sailors, and all will be lost."

It was useless his attempting to calm the terrified mob. A few indeed attended to his directions, but the greater number made a rush for the companion ladder. In their selfish terror they almost blocked up the passage, and several women and children were crushed and trampled on.

The sound of the water rushing in from below, and washing down from above, added wings to their haste, and a dense human wave surged violently towards the deck. Seeing that he could do nothing, and fearing from the ominous sounds of breaking, crashing timber, and the steady

gurgle of the water below, that the ship would soon break up, he sought eagerly for Ellen. She had not gone on deck, he knew, for his eyes had scanned from the first every person who passed out of the saloon door. Neither was she in the saloon itself, now nearly empty.

Mrs. Smart and her children were at that moment pushing frantically to gain the deck. He rushed up to her as she reached the foot of the steps, saying,

“Where is Mrs. Weldon? For God’s sake tell me!”

“I don’t know. Oh! Lord deliver us! We shall all be drowned. Mercy, mercy! Save us, Colonel Hastings!”

She seized hold of his coat with the natural instinct which leads the weak and terrified to cling in moments of danger to those who are least affected by it. Intent only on saving Ellen, he tore himself away from her frenzied grasp, and ran to Ellen’s cabin. This was no time for

ceremony or decorum. He opened the door, but it was quite dark, he could see nothing.

“Ellen, Ellen, are you here?”

The only answer was a groan; and groping about he felt a female form lying huddled on the bed.

“Good Heavens! what is the matter? Is it you, Ellen? The ship has struck, and I have come to save you, or perish with you. Get up and slip on a dressing-gown, anything, and come with me.”

“Leave me, Oswald, save yourself, never mind me, I am so—ill—I—want—to die.”

“Nonsense; get up directly.”

“I can’t move.”

Rightly guessing that she was so prostrated with sea-sickness as to be indifferent as to whether she lived or died, he wasted no more time in argument, but hastily with a cigar-fuzee lighting the cabin-lamp, he proceeded to tie a blanket round

her, to slip on a pair of shoes, and to envelope her helpless and almost unclothed form with his own military great coat. She was too ill to resist, object, or even to notice that which at another time would have so outraged her modesty.

Without a word she let him lift her in his arms and carry her on deck. It was high time. It was merely a question of a few minutes with the good ship's existence. An attempt had been made at first to back her off the rocks, but the water pouring into the engine-room had extinguished the fires.

Looking around him, Oswald saw that they were within a few yards of land. Blue lights had been at once burnt and rockets sent up as signals of distress, and already Oswald could see torches moving about on the cliffs above.

He laid his charge down under the lee of the saloon skylight, where she was comparatively sheltered from the sea

which beat continually over the ship, and went in quest of the Captain. From him he learnt that during his absence in the saloon, certain of the passengers and crew had proceeded without orders to launch some of the boats, but these had been dashed to pieces, or swamped in the attempt, and all the occupants drowned.

“There are now only two boats left, which will not hold above half our number, even if they could live in this sea, which I doubt; I have put guards over them, though, and will not use them till every thing else fails. Our chief hope lies in assistance from shore. If it were daylight, I daresay we could manage to get to land, for, you see, it is only fifty yards from us. Dreadful, isn’t it, to be so near, and yet as badly off almost as if we were fifty miles distant.”

Just then a voice from the cliff came through a speaking trumpet, bidding them look out for a rope which would be sent by a

rocket. Ere the sound had died away a flash of fire was seen, and what looked like a shooting star cleft the air. A second of breathless suspense elapsed, and the cry of despair which rose to Heaven as it fell a few yards short of the ship, sounded like the knell of doom.

An awful interval now occurred, during which every one on board glared fiercely into the gloom, which seemed as if it had been lit up by a momentary gleam of hope only to mock their helpless misery. After a few minutes, which were as years to those who were thus as it were watching the last remaining sands of the hour glass of life running rapidly out, a voice a second time shouted,

“Look out.”

This time the rocket was discharged with success, and the cord which it bore fell over the ship, and was immediately seized. By its means a stout rope was at once hauled ashore, and a cradle quickly

rigged for the transit of the surviving waiters on death. The women and children, in spite of some selfish efforts on the part of a few wretched creatures frightened by danger out of all manhood, were first taken off.

Among the earliest was Ellen, whose half senseless form Oswald carefully lashed to the cradle. How painfully he watched the dark object, which was more than all the world to him, as by the light of a fire kindled on the cliff he could see it gradually approaching safety. Steadily now went on the work, yet very slowly, and ere half the women and children had been landed, the captain expressed a fear to Oswald that the ship would not hold together long enough to save many more. God, however, in his mercy ordained otherwise. Every one had at last reached the shore, but the Captain, who insisted on leaving the deck last, and Oswald, who, with the usual chivalry of a British officer,

disdained to race for a life which might perhaps only be saved at the expense of others.

When Oswald's turn at length came, it was evident that the ship was on the point of breaking up, the water being already up to the knees of those standing on the poop. Indeed, it seemed doubtful whether it would last during the short time required to haul Oswald on shore.

"Go on, Colonel, that cradle will never come back, so I'll try and swarm up by the rope."

"No, no, you get into the cradle, I can manage."

But the Captain persisted, and Oswald yielded. Half the passage had already been made when Oswald felt the rope suddenly become loose, and had he not instinctively grasped at it, he would have been swept into the boiling surge beneath. Clinging with all the energy

which the thought of self-preservation inspires, he succeeded in maintaining his hold till, after receiving several severe blows from the jutting rocks, he was drawn up perfectly exhausted to the summit. The Captain was equally fortunate.

CHAPTER XIII.

SAFE IN HARBOUR AT LAST.

AFTER a few moments' rest Oswald followed his companions in shipwreck to the light-house, which, with a tolerably large farm-house near it, was about a mile distant. There they found the rest of the survivors already receiving every kindness and succour which the good-hearted inhabitants could bestow, and a glass of spirits and a warm fire soon revived our hero. His first inquiry was for Ellen, and he was told by the people at the light-house, which was the place he was taken to, that all the women were at the farm-house. On hearing this, he at once set off to see how Ellen was, and had the satisfaction of learning that, though still

much exhausted, she was a great deal better than at first, and was then in bed.

The farmer's wife added,

"She be mighty uneasy and fidgetty, like about something though, poor thing. She do nothing but keep on talking about somebody as she lies half asleep."

"What name was it, my good woman ? Do you remember ?"

"I can't exactly say, sir, but I think I should know it if I heard it again."

"Is it Oswald ?" said our hero, with blushing face and a heart palpitating with pleasurable anticipation.

"That's it, Ozald. She bain't quite asleep, but just a sort of dozing, and every now and again she do say, pretty creature, 'Ozald, where are you ? Ozald, save me ! Ozald is dead.' and then the tears come into her poor eyes. It do make me feel quite foolish like. She be mighty fond of Ozald, sir, to be sure, Mayhap, he's her sweetheart or husband."

"Now, dame, you go and tell her, wake her if necessary, for it will do her good, that Colonel Hastings has been saved, and has come to inquire after her."

"I will, sir, surely."

Oswald waited for her return, when he had the satisfaction of hearing that on being roused from her semi-stupor and receiving the message, she had sunk back on her pillow with a "thank God," and after greatly weeping for a few minutes had sunk into a sweet sleep.

Before our hero lay down to rest on the rough couch of skins made up for him, he breathed a fervent prayer to the Almighty for having not only saved both his and Ellen's lives, but for giving him a gleam of hope that those lives would henceforth be passed together. He almost felt inclined to be grateful for the shipwreck which had brought him such happiness, for now he knew that Ellen still loved him; but when

he thought of the lives lost, and the penury to which many of the poorer passengers were reduced, he rejected the thought as impious and selfish. He then stretched himself on the floor and enjoyed a refreshing sleep, which lasted till nearly noon.

When he awoke he remembered that he had been too much occupied, first, by anxiety for Ellen, and afterwards by joy at discovering that she still loved him, to think of asking where they had been wrecked. He now ascertained that they had been thrown on the coast of Newfoundland, not many miles from St. John's, and that waggons had already been sent for to take them to that town. His next step was to go and inquire after Ellen. He was told that she had just woke up, after a long sleep, much refreshed, though still weak. Such good tidings made him enjoy his breakfast, which though plain was of excellent quality, and most acceptable after all he had gone through.

In the course of the day, a portion of the party set off for St. John's which they reached during the night. On the morrow, Oswald, Ellen, Mrs. Smart, her children, her maid, and a few steerage passengers followed, and arriving at nightfall were accommodated in an hotel. On the way, Oswald had taken advantage of a bad bit of road to get out and walk by the side of Ellen's waggon. The only other occupants were the Smarts, and Oswald was in such favour with Mrs. Smart from his gallant behaviour on the night of the shipwreck, that nothing he could do, even should he commit that most outrageous of offences, making love to the governess, would have been considered wrong by her. He took advantage of this amiable frame of mind, and saying that Mrs. Weldon and he came from the same place, and had been friends as boy and girl, he told her that he was going to have a chat with her about old times. A gracious assent was

accorded, and placing himself at the back of the waggon, he had a long and undisturbed talk with Ellen.

He determined that ere he reached St. John's he would learn his fate, and not allow any false delicacy or fears to stand in the way of his happiness. Under other circumstances he would have shrunk from asking for a love which might seem to be granted only out of gratitude; but he felt she still loved him, her half-delirious exclamations assured him on that point, and he loathed the idea of seeing her continue a moment longer than he could help in a position, which by the world at large is, whether rightly or wrongly, looked on as somewhat menial. Besides he might not again have an opportunity of speaking to her privately.

“How do you feel now?” he began in a low voice.

“Oh, very much better, thank you,” she whisperingly replied; “though still rather

weak; but how can I ever say enough to thank you for saving my life? Had it not been for you, I should never have left that ship alive."

" You ask me how you can thank me. I will tell you. Give me the right never to leave your side again. God knows, Ellen, how I love you. The story I told you the other day was my own history. I do not excuse myself for my apparent fickleness, but, driven to despair by the loss of you, I madly sought in every direction for some consolation, some excitement to divert my thoughts. I may have fancied for the moment that I cared about other girls, but I know now I never really loved them, never loved any but you. You have been the guiding star of my existence, the magnet which led me on to deeds of which, perhaps otherwise, I should have been incapable. In the most desperate undertakings, your image has ever been present to my mind. It has been the

thought of your sweet self which has nerved my arm, has gained me all my decorations. I have lost these by this shipwreck, but I shall not regret it if I may wear you on my heart in their place. Do not say no, I know you love me, for the woman at the farm told me that my name was ever on your lips when you were brought in. Say, dearest, you will be my own dear wife, will you not?"

What woman could resist such an appeal? At all events, Ellen could not, and she answered by placing her hand in Oswald's.

Fervently clasping it, he murmured,
"At last, thank God, my own now
till death."

When the first sweet intoxication of the only real happiness he had known since, in the theatre at Hastings Park, he had heard the sweet avowal from her girlish lips that she loved him, had passed away, he began to consider what was to be done with regard

to Mrs. Smart. With his usual promptness he determined to tell that lady everything, and at once. With this view he left his own waggon, and entered that in which Ellen was sitting.

Mrs. Smart was much astonished at the disclosure, but being a kind-hearted woman, and interested moreover by the romance in which she herself was to a certain extent concerned, she expressed herself delighted. After warmly shaking Oswald's hand, she, after the manner of women when they are pleased, bestowed a shower of tears and kisses on the blushing Ellen, telling her to look on her as her mother till a husband took her place.

Our tale is now drawing to a close. The day after they arrived at St. John's, Oswald, by the help of some officers whom he had known in the Crimea, managed to raise a sum of money sufficient to last him till remittances could arrive from England. This done, he obtained a license

from the Bishop, and then, with Mrs. Smart's help, procured as good an outfit as the local stores could afford. As for his own clothes, he succeeded tolerably well, but Ellen's were more difficult to obtain. However, that circumstance gave them little concern, for they were too much absorbed in their mutual happiness to care as to whether or not they presented a very bridal appearance.

Three days later they were married, and within forty-eight hours of the ceremony departed in a steamer for Quebec. When we last heard of them, they were spending Christmas at Hastings Park, Oswald having shortly after his marriage exchanged into a regiment in England, in order the better to look after his property.

For the benefit of our lady readers, we will add that there is no fear of Hastings Park descending in other than the direct line, Mrs. Hastings having

already presented her husband with two boys. That Oswald and his wife are as happy as the day is long can be easily seen in their faces.

Mrs. Sutton and her husband still continue to occupy and people the Vicarage, and by this time they are able to sit in their gate without the slightest fear of an enemy.

Of the career of Euphemia, Marchioness of Rochdale, we have nothing that is pleasant to relate. Any remorse she may have felt for her treatment of Oswald was quickly extinguished in the gaieties of Paris. The rich English milord and his beautiful wife created quite a sensation in that pleasure-loving capital ; for did they not rival even Russian Princes and Princesses in the brilliancy of their fêtes ? A dozen times a day, at least, did Euphemia repeat to herself that nothing could equal the charm of being the wife of a rich and liberal Marquis.

At length they returned to England, and at Rochdale Castle were received by the tenantry with a perfect ovation, at which the charitable neighbours, deaf to the stories of Euphemia's elopement, eagerly assisted. For a short time, everything seemed to combine for her happiness. Her husband, it is true, was, not so attentive as at first, but then that signified nothing. She had married his coronet and estate, not him. A cloud soon, however, began to appear on the horizon. The neighbours, too dependent on Rochdale castle for balls, parties, and a glimpse of London society, were as assiduous as ever in their homage; but somehow or other there was not quite so much anxiety, on the part of some of the most desirable members of the best society, to accept their hospitality. Bachelors indeed came willingly, as did also a few married men without their wives. Some married women, too, either of cha-

racters which had been breathed on, or hangers on to the charmed circle, showed equal readiness; but mothers with daughters, ladies belonging to the *crème de la crème* and of unimpeachable reputations, and young brides, kept provokingly aloof.

Not perhaps that these had any strong personal objection to visiting Rochdale Castle, but the scandal about Euphemia's marriage had been so great, and was so recent, that they felt that from persons of their position something was due to appearances. Euphemia received another mortification when in the following spring she wished to be presented at the Drawing Room. Lord Rochdale was then told that Her Majesty made it a rule never to receive anyone who had made a runaway match, and that she could not make an exception in Lady Rochdale's favour.

Furious at this consequence of what he had at first looked on as rather

an exploit, and somewhat wearied of the sameness of married life, Lord Rochdale completely threw off all restraint. Not only did he neglect his wife most openly, but even beat her, and should anyone have sought to deliver an important telegraphic message to him during the night, it would not have been advisable to go first to his house, at all events till he had tried certain houses in Brompton and St. John's Wood.

Maddened at last by her husband's behaviour, and the slights or compassion, both equally galling to her proud spirit, which she was continually receiving in society, she became perfectly reckless.

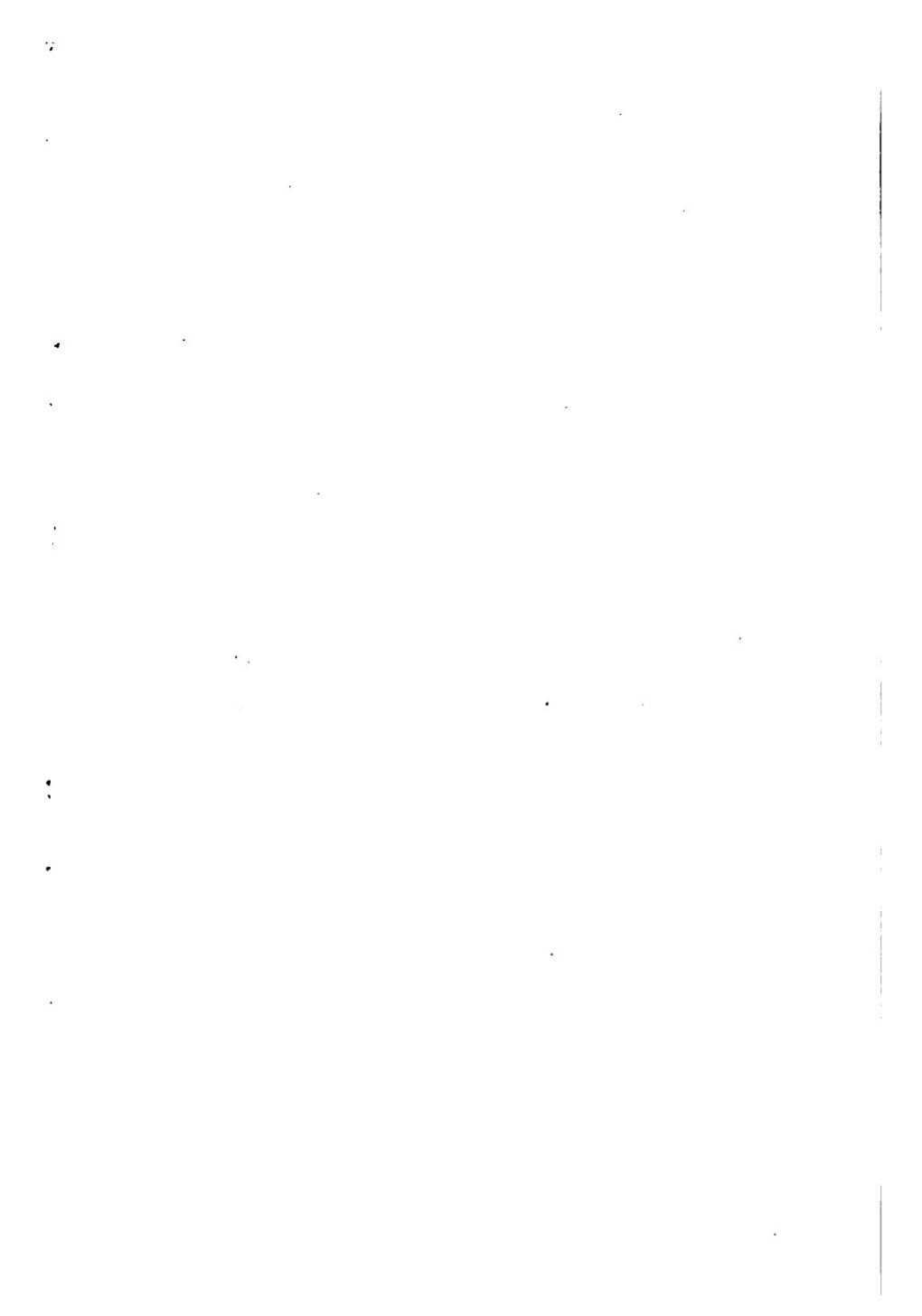
When such is the case with a high-born beauty, the end is not difficult to be foreseen. After a wild career of something more than flirtation, she eloped with a certain Italian, supposed to be a Count, but discovered eventually to be nothing better

than a clever adventurer, with no countship but of his own bestowal.

In due course a divorce took place, and the *soi-disant* Count del Torre, enraged at finding that, besides her jewels, she had but a paltry three or four thousand pounds, took to ill-treating her with as much brutality as Lord Rochdale had done. He even refused her the poor reparation of marriage, and by the last accounts she was living at Florence with a Russian nobleman to whom del Torre had given her in discharge of a gambling debt.

Having thus, as in duty bound, not neglected the Nemesis which all moral writers should bear in mind, we close our narrative of the adventures in Love and War of Oswald Hastings, the Queen's Aide-de-Camp.

THE END.



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thought of your sweet self which has nerved my arm, has gained me all my decorations. I have lost these by this shipwreck, but I shall not regret it if I may wear you on my heart in their place. Do not say no, I know you love me, for the woman at the farm told me that my name was ever on your lips when you were brought in. Say, dearest, you will be my own dear wife, will you not?"

What woman could resist such an appeal? At all events, Ellen could not, and she answered by placing her hand in Oswald's.

Fervently clasping it, he murmured,
"At last, thank God, my own now
till death."

When the first sweet intoxication of the only real happiness he had known since, in the theatre at Hastings Park, he had heard the sweet avowal from her girlish lips that she loved him, had passed away, he began to consider what was to be done with regard

to Mrs. Smart. With his usual promptness he determined to tell that lady everything, and at once. With this view he left his own waggon, and entered that in which Ellen was sitting.

Mrs. Smart was much astonished at the disclosure, but being a kind-hearted woman, and interested moreover by the romance in which she herself was to a certain extent concerned, she expressed herself delighted. After warmly shaking Oswald's hand, she, after the manner of women when they are pleased, bestowed a shower of tears and kisses on the blushing Ellen, telling her to look on her as her mother till a husband took her place.

Our tale is now drawing to a close. The day after they arrived at St. John's, Oswald, by the help of some officers whom he had known in the Crimea, managed to raise a sum of money sufficient to last him till remittances could arrive from England. This done, he obtained a license

from the Bishop, and then, with Mrs. Smart's help, procured as good an outfit as the local stores could afford. As for his own clothes, he succeeded tolerably well, but Ellen's were more difficult to obtain. However, that circumstance gave them little concern, for they were too much absorbed in their mutual happiness to care as to whether or not they presented a very bridal appearance.

Three days later they were married, and within forty-eight hours of the ceremony departed in a steamer for Quebec. When we last heard of them, they were spending Christmas at Hastings Park, Oswald having shortly after his marriage exchanged into a regiment in England, in order the better to look after his property.

For the benefit of our lady readers, we will add that there is no fear of Hastings Park descending in other than the direct line, Mrs. Hastings having

already presented her husband with two boys. That Oswald and his wife are as happy as the day is long can be easily seen in their faces.

Mrs. Sutton and her husband still continue to occupy and people the Vicarage, and by this time they are able to sit in their gate without the slightest fear of an enemy.

Of the career of Euphemia, Marchioness of Rochdale, we have nothing that is pleasant to relate. Any remorse she may have felt for her treatment of Oswald was quickly extinguished in the gaieties of Paris. The rich English milord and his beautiful wife created quite a sensation in that pleasure-loving capital ; for did they not rival even Russian Princes and Princesses in the brilliancy of their fêtes ? A dozen times a day, at least, did Euphemia repeat to herself that nothing could equal the charm of being the wife of a rich and liberal Marquis.

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accorded, and placing himself at the back of the waggon, he had a long and undisturbed talk with Ellen.

He determined that ere he reached St. John's he would learn his fate, and not allow any false delicacy or fears to stand in the way of his happiness. Under other circumstances he would have shrunk from asking for a love which might seem to be granted only out of gratitude; but he felt she still loved him, her half-delirious exclamations assured him on that point, and he loathed the idea of seeing her continue a moment longer than he could help in a position, which by the world at large is, whether rightly or wrongly, looked on as somewhat menial. Besides he might not again have an opportunity of speaking to her privately.

"How do you feel now?" he began in a low voice.

"Oh, very much better, thank you," she whisperingly replied; "though still rather

weak; but how can I ever say enough to thank you for saving my life? Had it not been for you, I should never have left that ship alive."

" You ask me how you can thank me. I will tell you. Give me the right never to leave your side again. God knows, Ellen, how I love you. The story I told you the other day was my own history. I do not excuse myself for my apparent fickleness, but, driven to despair by the loss of you, I madly sought in every direction for some consolation, some excitement to divert my thoughts. I may have fancied for the moment that I cared about other girls, but I know now I never really loved them, never loved any but you. You have been the guiding star of my existence, the magnet which led me on to deeds of which, perhaps otherwise, I should have been incapable. In the most desperate undertakings, your image has ever been present to my mind. It has been the

thought of your sweet self which has nerved my arm, has gained me all my decorations. I have lost these by this shipwreck, but I shall not regret it if I may wear you on my heart in their place. Do not say no, I know you love me, for the woman at the farm told me that my name was ever on your lips when you were brought in. Say, dearest, you will be my own dear wife, will you not?"

What woman could resist such an appeal? At all events, Ellen could not, and she answered by placing her hand in Oswald's.

Fervently clasping it, he murmured,
"At last, thank God, my own now
till death."

When the first sweet intoxication of the only real happiness he had known since, in the theatre at Hastings Park, he had heard the sweet avowal from her girlish lips that she loved him, had passed away, he began to consider what was to be done with regard

to Mrs. Smart. With his usual promptness he determined to tell that lady everything, and at once. With this view he left his own waggon, and entered that in which Ellen was sitting.

Mrs. Smart was much astonished at the disclosure, but being a kind-hearted woman, and interested moreover by the romance in which she herself was to a certain extent concerned, she expressed herself delighted. After warmly shaking Oswald's hand, she, after the manner of women when they are pleased, bestowed a shower of tears and kisses on the blushing Ellen, telling her to look on her as her mother till a husband took her place.

Our tale is now drawing to a close. The day after they arrived at St. John's, Oswald, by the help of some officers whom he had known in the Crimea, managed to raise a sum of money sufficient to last him till remittances could arrive from England. This done, he obtained a license

from the Bishop, and then, with Mrs. Smart's help, procured as good an outfit as the local stores could afford. As for his own clothes, he succeeded tolerably well, but Ellen's were more difficult to obtain. However, that circumstance gave them little concern, for they were too much absorbed in their mutual happiness to care as to whether or not they presented a very bridal appearance.

Three days later they were married, and within forty-eight hours of the ceremony departed in a steamer for Quebec. When we last heard of them, they were spending Christmas at Hastings Park, Oswald having shortly after his marriage exchanged into a regiment in England, in order the better to look after his property.

For the benefit of our lady readers, we will add that there is no fear of Hastings Park descending in other than the direct line, Mrs. Hastings having

already presented her husband with two boys. That Oswald and his wife are as happy as the day is long can be easily seen in their faces.

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an exploit, and somewhat wearied of the sameness of married life, Lord Rochdale completely threw off all restraint. Not only did he neglect his wife most openly, but even beat her, and should anyone have sought to deliver an important telegraphic message to him during the night, it would not have been advisable to go first to his house, at all events till he had tried certain houses in Brompton and St. John's Wood.

Maddened at last by her husband's behaviour, and the slights or compassion, both equally galling to her proud spirit, which she was continually receiving in society, she became perfectly reckless.

When such is the case with a high-born beauty, the end is not difficult to be foreseen. After a wild career of something more than flirtation, she eloped with a certain Italian, supposed to be a Count, but discovered eventually to be nothing better

than a clever adventurer, with no countship but of his own bestowal.

In due course a divorce took place, and the *soi-disant* Count del Torre, enraged at finding that, besides her jewels, she had but a paltry three or four thousand pounds, took to ill-treating her with as much brutality as Lord Rochdale had done. He even refused her the poor reparation of marriage, and by the last accounts she was living at Florence with a Russian nobleman to whom del Torre had given her in discharge of a gambling debt.

Having thus, as in duty bound, not neglected the Nemesis which all moral writers should bear in mind, we close our narrative of the adventures in Love and War of Oswald Hastings, the Queen's Aide-de-Camp.

THE END.

N E W W O R K S

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